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THE SCHOOL OF PLATO

THE

SCHOOL OF PLATO

ITS ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT, AND REVIVAL
UNDER THE ROMAN EMPIRE

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BY

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TO

REX HOFFMEISTER

TO THE READER

I am afraid that my title will appear somewhat of a misnomer, and that a certain inconsistency will be observed in my treatment of the subject. After all, it is the Roman Imperial Age, and no other, which aroused the initial interest; faintly (I fear) reflected in this book. And yet the whole course of Greek speculation is examined, from start to finish, from a peculiar and restricted standpoint. I hope that this embrace of an almost infinite topic will be pardoned: it did not, to me, seem possible to account for the phenomena of Roman Platonism or Stoicism (in reality, much the same thing), unless in such a survey we had attempted to understand the intrinsic spring of bewilderment and philosophy,—I mean the selfish desire for personal happiness, attained only by a satisfactory interpretation of our own nature, and the wider Nature that enfolds, restrains, and perhaps completes it. The antagonism is seen to be no longer the antithesis of matter and spirit, ideal and real, the dualism of evil and right,—but, far more truly, that sense of estrangement and hostility entertained by the spirit of reflecting man towards a Universe which appears to him alien, or at least incon-

siderate; and which, at all events (whether adapted to our convenience or not), is, and must remain, very imperfectly apprehended and understood, either in its purpose, essence, or constitution.

The ultimate motive is, of course (I need not waste words over a fictitious altruism!), a selfish one; and the impulse to speculate is either curiosity or the satisfaction of a moral need. Yet the examination of systems is not (so far as I know) usually guided by this sense of the underlying aim. I have given exclusive and unreserved attention to this point alone: the relations of God and Nature to Man. For this reason, too, I must ask forgiveness for two faults which, I know, are not easily excused: the seeming superficiality of the treatment,—no details being admitted, and a stern banishment pronounced on all minor episodes in the narrative; and, too, a certain iteration—to many, I fear, wearisome—of the main problem, and a reminder or a recapitulation in almost every essay of the results of the previous search. May I claim credence when I say that the accumulation of evidence (patiently gathered in a dozen years) does really lie behind the specious paradoxes or (worse still) the obvious truisms, which may perhaps seem the more sterile at each repetition? But I could not encumber or conceal the main doctrine by abundant and yet misleading commentary; and, for brevity, I take for granted a general acquaintance with the history and development of Thought. I reserve dates, analyses, contrasts, and personal details for a later volume.

One word more: the few notes admitted have, in each case, been added as explanatory or evidential, after the completion of the Essays; and I did not read Lotze's Microcosm until the greater part of the volume was in the press.

The Manor House,
Exbourne,
Devon,
March 1896.

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THE SCHOOL OF PLATO

INTRODUCTION

(A.) The History of Thought has few more interesting periods than the first three centuries of the Christian era. It makes no difference from what point of view we regard it. Putting aside our natural prejudice, our interest in the success of the Church, and attempting to survey impartially the progress of Speculation, we cannot fail to be struck by the wealth and variety of ideas which mark the Imperial age of Rome, and the clearness of expression with which they are presented to us. In that age, all the systems that preceded in a long series reappear, but now simultaneously and with full consciousness of points of difference or of contact. Each one then receives a final and dogmatic restatement in the form almost of a creed, and presents itself for criticism in its clearest outline. All previous guesses at truth, whether made by Oriental or Jewish or Hellenic mind, now meet in the crucible, and contribute, in dissolving, their share to the formation of the New Element, the Philosopher's stone, the religious wisdom of the Christian Church. As if by some solemn compact, the State undertakes to relieve mankind of the oppressive incubus of political duties. Peace, plenty, and for the lower ranks amusement as well, are provided by the

self-sacrificing labours of the Roman emperors, in order that (as it would seem) the wisest in all nations might have leizure to discuss the problems of existence, to disseminate their own peculiar views without hindrance, and in their conclave decide upon the final or most probable answer, on which the future development of the human race would depend. The long armistice of aggressive wars, the patient and unambitious defence of the frontier, the successful maintenance of internal peace, the stereotyped and unalterable constitution, concealing under an appearance of caprice the most enduring stability, the careful and judicious government,—the entire removal of civic interests, save a dull sense of pride in the Roman name, which yet brought no responsibilities, —all combined to give to philosophers a unique opportunity, unbounded leizure for thorough inquiry into the hopes of Man and the significance of the World. In that period when no school of thought lacked capable representatives, when all possible suggestions of adjustment received an impartial hearing,—when the State, like the civil government of Rome during a papal election, had no favourites, and supported no candidate, but rather rigidly confined itself to the then discredited offices of keeping order and providing sustenance,—there was a strong likelihood that some final and adequate solution would be attained. And after a rapid glance at Universal History, as known to us, we must assert that at first sight such seems to have been the result.

§ 2. The problem which required solution was nothing less than the relation of Subject and Object; the reconcilement of the Individual (consciousness hitherto unconscious) with Society, Nature, Divine Decrees, or Fatal Order. Once convinced that he is an end in himself,—and to this conviction the entire course of Greek wisdom leads as to a final result,—once, I say, convinced of his

own inherent dignity and value, individual man will only return to amicable relations with the Universal, which attempts in embracing to absorb him, if he be assured that in some corporate life, in such submission to a comprehensive law, lies the secret of his own personal welfare and happiness. For nearly two thousand years (a long period when six forms the extreme limit of our survey), the Christian ideal, compounded of the various contributions of which I spoke, has been maintained among the so-called progressive races of Europe. In it now survive, under a divine sanction, most of the valuable discoveries made by reflecting man in the ages of philosophy. It has points of contact with all previous systems; indeed, the Church has so clearly appropriated the spoils of the older kingdom, that it is not difficult to prove, in a fashion, and with great show of probability, its purely *human* origin.

§ 3. It is a matter of some concern to the present age, whether the solution given in the Christian doctrine and ethics (the former immeasurably the more important) is to maintain itself, or to give way to some new substitute: whether the victory of the Church after the long conclave was final, or a mere halt in the march of progress, a truce for a season owing to the fatigue of the combatants. An inquiry, then, into the speculation of the Roman age should be of interest, as helping us to determine how far we are to-day confronted with really novel problems, perplexed by entirely fresh solutions. For it is clear that no one can to-day afford to play the reformer or the prophet, without a thorough knowledge of the past; or to come forward as a propounder of new truths, without asking whether he may not have been anticipated. To one who proposes to occupy these high functions, the study of the Imperial age is above all others indispensable. It is a miniature, a summary of

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all previous and perhaps all subsequent times, and the various Protean forms of its reflectiveness deserve study no less than its unrivalled political constitution,—a constitution imitated with more or less clumsiness by the two Saxon nations in India and Germany,—"Unity in and above, but not destroying, Diversity."

(B.) Now it is clear that in thus speaking of problems, and their answers and solutions, I do not mean *theoretical* problems of ordinary knowledge. And when I employ the term philosophy, I do not intend to convey the modern and restricted use of the word. Above all things, Roman Imperial speculation is concerned with *practice*, and must be approached from that side, however much the *practical* aim seems to pass over later into the *theoretical*, and to become involved in it. It was not, as it is to-day, the main and fundamental duty of Philosophy to inquire "under what formula can we express these perfectly familiar functions?" The sage aimed at the only *practical* end worth considering by mature and fully self-conscious man,—the Attainment of Happiness. We shall explain (or rather express) the unavoidable experiences of life in a variety of ways, which will differ from age to age, and may vary indefinitely;—whether we ask about the puzzle of spiritual and bodily union, the action of the brain, the process of thought, the influence of environment, the mechanism of the Universe, the ultimate composition of its elements, and the laws or cycles of material and social change. When we discover a convenient phrase to embrace certain phenomena in the outer world, we do not *explain*; nor do we *control* or guide our action because we can define the transactions of our own complex nature, or invent a formula to embrace them. But in the realm of *practical* wisdom, there is the stable and unalterable fact, however inexplicable, of the *needs* of the personal spirit. And in

history at least,—the study of mankind,—we are on firm ground, actual fact, obviously true experience (though it be but the history of illusion and deceit), and not on the shifting quicksands of so-called Sciences, expressed in terms of animistic relation to us, concerned with things in their very nature unknowable, and (if the truth be told) immaterial and indifferent to the main practical business of life:—the attainment of satisfaction by means of self-development.

(C.) Thus from this side, Philosophy is not a narrative of discoveries and demonstrations. We do not read of certain proofs, so much as tentative guesses. It is the *process*, not the *result* that is of value; because, however little knowledge we acquire of things without, the search throws light upon our own inner nature, and teaches us to depend on ourselves and find our supreme contentment, our only motive for social action, within. All the highest truths (as we may call them), on which our moral nature, and, in consequence (as we may suppose), our happiness depend, are incapable of proof. They are corollaries; or (in another light) *postulates* of the practical life. Insight, then, into the Imperial speculation gives truth,—not about things, it may be urged, but about human nature; and it is clear that such knowledge is far more valuable than the apprehension of *absolute Truth*, even if this were possible. We may be perfectly certain that such consideration of basal problems will recur, so long as this soul which reflects remains the same—restless, inquisitive, and, above all, discontented and unsatisfied with the present, whether that present be adverse or prosperous. But there is absolutely no sign that human nature is changing, or that interest in final problems is abating.

(D.) It would be idle to try and divorce this *practical* philosophy from *religion*. It becomes religion when it is

sensible of failure. It is impossible in the Roman age to keep the two apart. A study of ethics or of the law of duty, a search for positive or negative happiness, at once brings a man to the question of man's place in Creation, (or rather, to avoid prejudging the matter,) in the Universe (whether of actuality, or of his own sensations merely). I need not be at pains to prove that this is a *religious* question (one upon which science must be silent, for this is no question of *facts*, but of an *Idea*); and entails all such inquiries as centre round the problem of Freedom, Duty, Immortality, the Divine Nature, and the Purpose of the Cosmic Process. The significance of the Roman age is the exhaustive examination and arduous labour given to these topics. As to the result, it is of course, as before, an open question; but in going over the long-forgotten controversies,—in patiently sifting these tentative arguments or dogmatic assertions in favour of and against such eternal hypotheses, in understanding these futile harmonies proposed to unite matter and spirit, God and man, State and individual, Necessity and Freedom,—what a flood of light is shed upon that ultimate reality to us, our own soul: seen large in history, in the infinite pertinacity of its grasp upon the illusory worlds of the Unseen and Eternal!

(E.) This period has, till quite lately, suffered under two imputations, which has prevented a candid and unprejudiced estimate of its value and significance. The Imperial system was misrepresented as a truculent despotism, reposing on military power and oppressing a multitude of nations once free and autonomous, now sighing in vain over the past glories of their turbulent independence. Most of our childish histories of Rome ended with a dirge over the buried Republic, and a sort of warning that now indeed the student who dared to press on into the unknown, was entering the gloomy

labyrinth of the dark ages. Sometimes the curtain was lifted for a moment to disclose the Titanic crimes of the earlier Cæsars, as revealed to us by these most trustworthy and impartial narrators, as they seemed; and was again hurriedly lowered upon the infernal scene, leaving us to suppose that the history, which we were mercifully spared, was of the same invariable hue. Again, the social life, the educated movements of the Empire, were dismissed with certain set phrases: the civilization was decadent and moribund, the philosophy a strange medley or amalgam of crude Eastern fables, Christian morality, and Hellenic ingenuity, an entire and deliberate desertion of reflecting Reason in exchange for opiatic visions. Some students regarded Christianity as to blame for what they called the degeneracy of the times, in overthrowing the patriotic sentiment of simple pagans, and in substituting for it a selfish morality; in awakening men from a peaceful harmony with Nature, in setting them at enmity and defiance with their true Mother. Others believed that the Church was the only safeguard against the wild and indecent Nature-worship of Oriental races, which disguised itself as religious Mysticism, and reached a wished-for oblivion and impersonality through orgiastic excess. To some it was a despicable age of superstition and credulity; while a single redeeming feature might be found in the noble and unworldly isolation, the self-denying devotion to duty, of the Stoic sage. Such summary incongruous and incompatible conclusions have been rejected as inadequate by the impartial students of to-day. We are now far more likely than at any previous time to arrive at a correct estimate of those wonderful centuries, when the foundations of Modern Europe were being laid, in a combination of Roman, Jewish, and Grecian elements.

(F.) Another most important cause for this misconcep-

tion of the Empire (and a reason now very likely to disappear) was the long *abeyance of political interest*, which was supposed to show a contemptible supineness, a ready slavery, a total ignorance or neglect of that which is of highest value in human life. But such an offence we are more likely to condone at the close than at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There are times in the history of men when the absorbing pursuits of the statesman, the governor, the mandarin (whether occupied with local or national interests), recede into the background, are practised in negligence or sullen indifference, or are given over without a murmur to a class of people, or to individuals peculiarly fitted for these ungrateful and prosaic toils. We can readily understand to-day a feeling of disgust at petty politics, which sixty or eighty years ago would have been stigmatized as treason against the loftiest conception of man,—an "independent being exercising those sublime functions of civil government, from which the tyranny and self-interest of kings, nobles, and priests have so long debarred him."

§ 2. But militant Republicanism is now almost obsolete; and the objects of Anarchist hatred to-day are no longer feudal privilege, royal and hereditary prerogative, sacerdotal pretensions and such like imaginary limitations on Equality, original and universal,—these supposed hindrances, against which sentimental Liberalism, here and on the Continent, struggled and declaimed so long, are found to be but shadows: that gallant fight was a mere beating of the air, so far as material benefits are concerned; and no man can live in the mere enjoyment of a boasted independence which means only complete isolation. Liberty must lead to something, and that something must be the very prosaic result, sufficiency of daily food, guaranteed under an earlier régime, which has now passed away. Political emancipation and the ex-

tension of the franchise certainly do not bring about social equality, or a uniform distribution of the good things of life. Freedom is posed as the final goal of all human striving, only so long as it is unattained; when we arrive at it, we see it to be a means and not an end. In a sense, indeed, the tendency to altruistic reform may be said to have been rooted in selfishness, in a desire to be rid of the old responsibilities towards the weaker and inferior, which a feudal and aristocratic régime certainly acknowledges, however imperfectly it fulfils, but which commercial or middle-class reformers believe they have satisfied or escaped, by conferring a nominal independence. Among the advanced "friends of man" there is little gratitude felt toward the early pioneers of democracy, or the champions of political equality; and their half-regretful retrospect on mediæval society is significant of a widespread change of feeling. The real difficulty is so much simpler and more fundamental than was suspected by these poetic enthusiasts; the question of to-day is not one of constitutional change, but of social reform,—how to insure daily bread for our increasing population.

§ 3. At last we have arrived at the real grievance of the working people: they do not care to exercise meaningless rights, unless by such exercise they secure material advantages. We cannot blame them; we should rather congratulate ourselves on being out of the misty region of false sentiment, face to face with overt selfishness. We are out of the dreamland of mere idealism: we confront facts, and thus, *individuals*; we have to deal with concrete realities, and are not bewildered and misled by shadowy theories. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the good offices of those who (from instinct or religious motive) sympathize with the poor, are seriously hindered by the fictitious autonomy of those who are in truth dependent. In political matters we are at

their mercy, that is, in the unfruitful region of Ideas,—but in the real business of life, when we meet them singly, and not in the aggregate, the upper classes are still superior. We cannot wonder at the difficulty of progress or reform to-day, which is advanced partly by violence, and the legislation, which attempts to rearrange incomes to suit the wishes of the majority; partly by the intense and sympathetic charity of private benevolence, a survival of a religious sentiment, that is in this connexion somewhat out of place; partly by appeals to the unalterable laws which are supposed to govern demand and supply; partly by somewhat reckless assertions that right and wrong, justice and equity, are not amenable to these laws at all.

§ 4. However intricate the solution proposed for social difficulties to-day, the immediate need is simple enough: satisfaction of the cravings of hunger, supply of work and sustenance for a population needy, and for the most part ignorant, as yet unthrifty, unrelying on its own efforts, and increasing with alarming rapidity—the old primal difficulty of food. The much-vaunted progress of the human race has brought us round, as in a circle, to the point from which our first parents started, on their expulsion from terrestrial paradise (where their limited requirements were at once satisfied by the bounty of Nature, not yet hostile). At present our reformers are trying to combine the two opposite conditions of *freedom* and *dependence*. It is impossible to say to-day whether the upper classes exist by the tolerance of the people, or the people by the long-suffering and charity of their superiors: who it is that creates the wealth of our country, the toiler (who is little more than an automaton), or the inventor and the capitalist; the hand or the brain. The working classes are playing a double rôle of master and servant; in the midst of all their appeals for relief

and compassion, we see their leaders have occasional recourse to the enactments of forcible appropriation;—conduct which must surely end in the destruction of the great, nay, the only fruitful principle and motive of well-doing, *noblesse oblige*. To which shall appeal be made?—to pity or to fear? Pity for others who are weaker; or fear for self, before the menaces of the stronger, because the more numerous? We have not yet clearly made up our minds.

§ 5. Such an epoch must of necessity be a time of disquiet and unrest. No one can forecast the future with certainty: are we tending to a complete democracy (whatever that may mean), or to the rule of the strong man, in just that part of our daily life, civil and social, of the importance of which, for practical comfort, we are beginning to modify our too exalted estimate?

(G.) Now the Roman Empire at least solved the supreme difficulty: the question of starvation in the midst of plenty—the standing paradox to-day, which may well remind us how fundamental is the problem with which civilized Europe is confronted. After the French Revolution, the main question seemed to be, "How are we to bring the people into a share of the government, from which they have been so long wrongfully kept?" It may seem to-day that this inquiry was a *ὕστερον πρότερον*, and that its hasty solution has brought us to an inextricable confusion: the free and enfranchized citizen to-day is worse off than a slave under the Roman Empire. Liberty is a costly thing, and requires more to maintain than the lower orders can afford. Rome decided to feed its inhabitants, regarding that as the main duty of an enlightened government—to pauperize its people. But it did not allow these dependents to interfere in the administration. We permit our servants to meddle in the government,

but we do not guarantee them subsistence; and we are only coming back, tentatively and half-terrified at our boldness, to the first axioms of the Roman political system.

(H.) With another of our modern difficulties, lying at the root of all others, the Imperial world was not disquieted,—I speak of indefinite increase of population, where it is (from the State's point of view) least valuable. It is clear that a Society which has enjoyed vigorous and enterprising youth, guided by instinct of domestic ties and a certain irrational patriotism, will, in its old age (I do not mean necessarily its decline), break up into its simplest constituent elements—into Individuals, highly self-conscious, and, to speak the truth, concerned each of them only with their own thoughts and sensations. A Family, refined by long and careful breeding and persistent education, will at last reach a point where the passions are blunted, the need of sensuous satisfaction is no longer felt,—where physical reproductiveness abates, and, to the outward eye, the house becomes extinct.[1] On the other hand, the decadence of the old civic standards of morality among a corrupted aristocracy no doubt allowed a host of various and bizarre excitements to arise

[1] "In contrast to the stronger muscular action and vital power called forth by the employment of the working classes, the intense mental strain and sensual life of the higher ranks consume more nervous force; and consequently the life of the race is much sooner spent. . . . We could almost believe that in the upper classes a just compensation is to be found in the longer mean extension of the *Individual* life, for the shorter average life of the *Family*; and that, considered from the standpoint of the *whole*, it is comforting to think that the families of the superior orders —even if they keep their ground among their own rank—make room for the advancement of the lower classes by a *gradual* process of *extinction*. Yet in the interests of the *whole*, this satisfaction is very shortsighted," etc. (*The Vital Question of the Family*, in Kenner's Collection of Hartmann's Essays, under the title "*The Sexes Compared*"; an astonishing volume, the moral of which is that Judaism and Pessimism is an impossible alliance.)

in place of sedate matrimonial joys,—passions which in their very nature (or unnaturalness) testify to a violent outburst of self-will and subjective caprice against a long thraldom to State interests.[1] Nor can we omit the influence of the Christian Church, whose teaching (however much it has been, since the Reformation, forced into a doubtful harmony with middle-class respectability, having for its norm a comfortable and self-centred married life) in its early days held up a somewhat different ideal to those who were capable of receiving it: an ideal which the universal testimony of all ages and all religions has pronounced higher. All these causes, in alliance with certain terrible pestilences and earthquakes, combined to check a too prolific increase in the citizens of the Empire. I do not wish to underrate the influence of physical disasters, but I would desire that the above important factors be not forgotten.

(I.) So perfect was the arrangement of social life, of easy communication, of equitable justice, of internal comfort, of civil administration, that the eyes of men were insensibly directed from the present upwards to a new domain; for this present condition was incapable of improvement, was consummate, and therefore *superseded* itself. I cannot maintain that the governors of Rome entered fully into this vigorous life of thought, which their paternal despotism made possible. It is, on the

[1] Hartmann, oddly enough, tries to assume the rôle of a new Moses or Augustus: "The social community suffers by this solution" (distaste for maternity, and a decrease in the number of marriages), "and therefore (!) such intensely egotistic ideas cannot be too arduously and opportunely contested. Maidens cannot learn too early that they have higher functions to perform than the mere satisfaction of pleasures. It is their task to add to the State as many sound and well-trained citizens as they are capable of producing, so that it may engage triumphantly in the struggle for national existence." This half-religious reactionary conservatism is as much out of place to-day as it was in the early times of the Empire.

contrary, clear that the Empire never completely apprehended or understood the continual motion of Philosophy and the Church, away from the present,—embellished with such ornaments of order, security, plenty, and amusement, —into the misty shadows of an imaginary or non-existent world. As in the familiar instance of the solicitous stepmother of the farmyard, the Empire watched with disappointment, chagrin, unease, and finally with indignant protest, the ungrateful efforts of the cultivated to escape from firm earth, where safety and abundance reigned, to hazard these dangerous and unnatural voyages on the sea of Speculation. Not that the Roman temperament was in itself incapable of these higher flights; but the Imperial officials, immersed in present business, and quite satisfied with its routine, stifled their latent aspirations after the Universal, the Idea; and remained content with a visible incarnation of the principle of government, asking for nothing beyond the concrete, the actual. But the Empire, like the naïve Secularism of to-day, sounded the recall in vain from these delights of secret meditation, of audacious thaumaturgy, of ecstatic devotion; and at last, with surprising and commendable reluctance, resorted to harsh measures against the most ungrateful children, who lived wholly in the future of a terrestrial millennium or a heavenly State. The gates of the Ideal city once opened to the gaze of the aspirant, there was no power on earth that could hold him back, be the enticement to stay among his fellows never so alluring. The model philosophers of the Empire, whose services, as we may well imagine, were subsidized by the State, were Lucian and Sextus Empiricus; and they spoke to deaf ears. By a strange law of the human mind, unvarying throughout history, and by no means as yet abrogated, the more charming and easy the present, the less it appealed to those who enjoyed it; the more the material wants of

men were satisfied in a perfect State, the less could they reconcile themselves to the belief that it was final. So true is Leopardi in regarding disease and want and discomfort as palliatives rather than causes, of ennui and tedium; which is engendered and not removed by the resources of civilization, the perfection of orderly and democratic government. For it is not enjoyment of material welfare, but the *process* of its attainment, that gives us satisfaction; the gradual removal of obstacles to our wishes, and not the final sense that no further hindrance exists. Man is only content with the present so long as he has some hope as yet unfulfilled, some grievance, some barrier to his progress; the moment he has attained everything that mortal can wish for, he either turns his attention to the spiritual world, or expires in despair amid the surfeit of the present.

(K.) Carlyle, with all that admiration for the supposed blythe and happy unconsciousness of the Classical Age which he had in common with the early speculators of this century, yet acknowledges that from this unceasing quest it is impossible to escape.

"The mere existence and necessity of a Philosophy is an evil. . . . Man is sent hither not to question, but to work; 'the end of man,' it was long ago written, 'is an Action, not a Thought.' In the Perfect State, all Thought were but the picture and inspiring symbol of Action. Philosophy, except as Poetry and Religion, would have no being." And yet he inquires, "how, in this imperfect State, can it be avoided, can it be dispensed with? Man stands as in the Centre of Nature; his fraction of Time encircled by Eternity; his handbreadth of Space engirdled by Infinitude; how shall he forbear asking himself what am I? and whence; and whither? How, too, except in slight partial hints, in kind asseverations and assurances, such as those with which a mother quiets her fretfully

inquisitive child, shall he get an answer to such inquiries?"

"The philosopher," says Dr. Stirling (in his *Secret of Hegel*, ii. 576), "is indeed the central light and heat of humanity; and this—by his answers to those very questions which Macaulay, the too precipitate pupil of Hume, consigns to children and half-civilized men." . . . "These interests *constitute what is essential to humanity as humanity.*" . . . "Man deprived of any interest in the questions concerned, would at once sink into no higher place than that of a human beaver, who knew only and valued only what contributed to his merely animal commodity. . . . What is peculiarly human, is not to live in towns, with soldiers and police, etc., safely to masticate our victuals; what is peculiarly human is to perceive the Apparition of the Universe; what is peculiarly human is to interrogate this apparition—is to ask in its regard, what?—whence?—why?—whither?"

(L.) I have of set purpose laid stress on the *possibility* of a universal and contented Agnosticism rather than on the *right* and *wrong* of the question. The words good and evil, just and unjust, noble and debased, are far too frequently employed to-day by both parties, friends and opponents of religious metaphysics, in senses and contexts where they are hopelessly ambiguous, or positively misleading. They are employed as if they were above inquiry, scepticism, and doubt; as if they would preserve their meaning and exert their sovereign influence, if the life of man was reduced from infinite possibility, to the circumscription of the animal's span. It is supposed that the love of Duty, and a self-sacrificing affection for humanity, are obvious axioms, which an all-devouring scepticism cannot reach. It is therefore useful to ascertain (by a study of writers whom a pious sentiment could not blind to the logical consequence of dogma), that these instinct-

ive prejudices, spontaneous and unreasoned, and apt to disappear if too closely scrutinized, have never yet existed apart from religious presupposition, that is, from a sense of the dignity, the value, the permanence of the single life.

(M.) With this spirit of restless unease and discontent, it is evident that we must come to terms. It is a domestic foe in our midst whom we cannot expel; each of us carries about with him in his own bosom the enemy of his own peace. Once upon a time the Stoic and the Indian pantheist attempted to extirpate, to annihilate *passion* (in its widest sense), and remain insensible to outward threats or allurements; while the Peripatetic proposed to moderate and guide without expulsion; and the Platonist to rationalize. To-day, and for some time previously, we are implored by the "friends of humanity" to abandon this ineffectual search after unseen verities, and resign ourselves contentedly, after our magnificent aspiration towards the Eternal, to the narrow limits of our life of seventy years (and that uncertain), and the solace which may be derived from a perfectly adjusted civil society. Now, the only question that need detain us, before we conform ourselves, with a sigh over our past dreams, to the creed of Positivism, is, whether this feat is possible for the human mind to achieve?—to take a draught of Lethe so deep that the old harassing thoughts and doubts and inquiries on what is behind the veil, what is the meaning of it all, shall never recur to a single soul again! Can we abandon this "fatal gift," this last half-ironical consolation given by the Immortals to suffering humanity,—Hope,—after the opening of Pandora's woe-laden box? If these metaphysical (and yet so practical) thoughts cannot be silenced, we must come to some compromise; we must, in the interests of our own peace (at the last resort, our only aim), accept with

more or less moral effort the best explanation which we can find of the Origin and Purpose of the World, of the Duty and the Destiny of Man,—not the race, but the unit. And the value of this explanation can only be ascertained by our individual experience, tested and corroborated by the voice of history in the development of mankind.

(N.) But in making a sort of mental picture of the society of the Roman Empire, we must not unduly colour one side of it. We have, in our present inquiry, to think only of the Malcontents, as we may call them. But how small and insignificant a part of the whole! Behind these literary remains of Christian or pagan sage, rare and scanty indeed, yet so conspicuous,—what vast expansive background of unrecorded Content! What opulent and robust mercantile enterprise, what splendour of Asiatic social life, what vigorous youthfulness in the extreme West, what keen appreciation of games and shows, what childlike delight in the savage menageries of the arena! Yet, putting this aside, and allowing that the Imperial system exactly corresponded to the desires of a wearied world,—solemnly, and almost with a sense of duty (unparalleled in antiquity), burdening its shoulders with the responsibility of the whole,—yet must we, and rightly, concentrate upon the educated and refined unease, which lifted the Christian or the philosopher above the cares or delights of the common herd. (The vulgar, the ἰδιώτης, the rabble, the ἀπαιδευτός,—how common at that epoch was this distinction, coming with all the more force in an Empire which had levelled all distinctions of rank in a uniform servitude to a single ruler! It is obvious, too, that the success of the Church was largely due to its solicitude for the welfare (not material but spiritual) of those classes which Philosophy neglected.)

§ 2. We do not judge an age wholly by its literature.[1] If a people be *happy* when it lacks a history,—*carent quia vate sacro*,—so is it true that a reflecting or introspective society, refusing to be engrossed in present comforts, does not betoken the most satisfactory condition of a people, from a statesman's point of view. His citizens are passing beyond his control. In Europe, at the time of our inquiry, very few share in this feeling; but their influence is so far-reaching in later time, their lesson so interesting, that they may be fairly taken as representing *the sum of ancient culture*: as showing the certain goal to which the whole course of Speculation was tending. Yet must we remember of how small a fragment are they the spokesmen. Continual caution, then, is needed in studying these rare monuments of the Imperial philosophers; to whom the current events of history are strange, into whose tranquil pages there penetrates no echo of the stirring yet innocent ambition of rival candidates for office, the din of border warfare, and but scanty vestige of gratitude for the assured security, the peace and plenty of the Imperial system.

(O.) Nothing, however, can well be more instructive at the present day (amid our rudimentary attempts to answer the great question of the maintenance of the poor), than to examine the effects of a perfect government upon the educated or reflective classes. What is likely to be the result of a consistent accommodation of demand and supply, the introduction of a singularly just yet monotonous distribution of external comforts? Clearly (unless we believe that the European mind has become Chinese) the moment the stage of insecure and hazardous sustenance has been transcended, speculative society (and I by no means exclude certain of the poorer

[1] The Roman Empire has, up to the present time, been judged mainly on the evidence of two peculiar authors,—Juvenal and Tacitus.

classes, who may, like Epictetus or Æsop, attain this "fatal gift of reflection") will forget entirely how it toiled and laboured for this possession, passing unnoticed and unthanked in the routine of daily life,—and will strain (by a necessary law, as it would seem, of our human nature) towards a spiritual kingdom, of which we become conscious citizens as soon as ever our immediate and material wants are supplied.[1] One by one, the race passes through the various habitations provided for it, but takes final rest in none. They are but halting-places for entire humanity, as for each single Soul in an infinite progress towards a goal, which is mercifully kept in obscurity. To the meditative mind, relieved of the pressing urgency of daily cares, open long vistas of possibility, new empires to conquer, new continents to discover in the Unknown. That this unrestful temper (eternal characteristic of the Indian mind, last step in a process for us) does not conduce to *contentment* must be clear: a "city of hogs" would be more comfortable, and perhaps more happy.

(P.) It is then our aim, in this volume, or rather series of volumes, to inquire what may be learnt as to certain essential components of human nature; I mean the

[1] "The true note of God's service" (says Mr. Bidder, University Sermon, Advent 1891) "is not permanence, but pilgrimage; on earth, at any rate, the highest end of man is the *pursuit*, and not the *enjoyment* of Rest, for here we have no abiding city, but we seek one to come."

This is true, also, if we substitute, with Lessing, *Knowledge* for *Rest*; we have, even in our philosophy, our love of wisdom, a horror of an unprogressive and final condition (hence the fascination exercised by the thought of an ever-fugitive Ideal, magnetizing things just because it can never be realized in them). Nor, on the third side of our nature, is *bodily comfort* a last resting-place of the wearied spirit; for indolence is not repose, and rest is only found in perpetual movement towards the unattainable. The *real* satisfaction which we to-day experience in binding Nature to our will, and wresting her secrets from her, must obviously be denied to our posterity, who have no glory of achievement and peril, but only the worthless pleasure of possession and inheritance.

religious instinct, and the sense of unrest, which carries us beyond all our present conditions, however wretched or however perfect, to seek for a "land which is very far off," and which forbids the Individual (as it forbids his shadow, Society) to remain contented with uninquiring and complacent fruition of the Garden of Eden.

(Q.) To those who believe that the highest exercise of human faculties is political, and the noblest engine of social progress is the ballot-box, this study may not be unprofitable. I shall be glad if it help to convince any single reflecting person that a condition of social comfort, of equal distribution of good things, is in its very nature unfinal; a mere preface, an indispensable preliminary, if you will, to that business of life which is especially human. Such a state has within it, or rather itself engenders, two causes of its own dissolution: the study of Self, and the revolt of the Individual. It is not true to say that we worship abstractions; as a rule, mankind bends before persons; and nothing can be clearer than that in the present age, when everyone is talking about the elimination of the personal, the end of the reign of Selfishness,—the influence and the indescribable glamour of a personality (that is, a rebellious and self-centred unit) is as strong a force as ever. Socialism can only be the nursery of ambition and self-will, a natural reaction of spontaneous egoism against a system which keeps it under severe control for some unscrutable or quite unintelligible end. We are not children to-day, to be kept in fetters, in the service of an idol called human progress; we claim to be ourselves, and lead our own life. What is called the School of the Decadence in literature, with its grotesque and exaggerated emphasis on the personal and the eccentric, is but the extreme Left of a legitimate movement. The threatened retirement

of the educated classes from all share in government and statecraft, is a sign that for the free development of the Personal some other realm is needed beyond a visible kingdom, whether of Nature or of the Body Politic. And the age of Imperial Rome may help us to answer some at least of the pressing questions of modern times. Wise men then sought for a region of Freedom, in which their spirits (that is, all they felt their own) could expand and develop. We can read there what will be the probable interests and relaxations of a society, disgusted with the cares and meannesses of civil government, and yet convinced by some irrefragable instinct that man's duty (*οἰκεῖον ἔργον*) does not lie in hoggish satiety. We are passing through a period of transition (the usual excuse!), and have not quite, perhaps, discarded the old beliefs of the "Enlightenment," that Happiness can be secured by Act of Parliament, and that the highest exercise of the human Reason lies either in the election of annual officials, or in the discovery of some fresh material convenience. But out of this Valley of Shadow we are rapidly ascending to a clearer light on the mountain-top; the disillusion which follows our vain efforts in the path of political or social reform, the failure of our theatrical and impotent attempts to deal with man, theoretical and in masses,—all this drives us back to a renewed and profounder study of human nature, of the Soul of man, the roots of whose being lie deep in an unseen world. We shall witness a revival of interest in the Personal, and of surprise at our recent love of the aggregate: we shall put aside preconceived notions of the rights, the liberty, the inherent goodness of man (in the abstract), and suchlike formulas; we shall correct that false sentiment which is the bane of modern reform; and reverting to history for a more accurate view,—and especially to such epochs as the

Roman Empire,—we shall seek to gain a fuller insight into the needs and aspirations, the hopes and the happiness of the Personal Spirit—after all, and even if this assurance be an illusion, the only abiding reality to us in a world of change.

PROLOGUE

BEFORE entering on the real enterprise,—an inquiry into the Platonic and other cognate systems of Thought under the Empire of Rome,—I shall be obliged to weary my readers with yet another survey of the previous History and Development of Philosophy. I am almost ashamed of venturing to put forward a fresh outline of that familiar course of Speculation, the Ionian hylozoists, the Sophistic Age, the significance of Socrates, the method or the doctrine of Plato, the dogmatism of Aristotle, the subjective schools of Stoic, Epicurean, Pyrrhonist, the revived religious mysticism of the New Pythagorean and Platonist,—but for my peculiar purpose there is no alternative. I must trace the main thesis of this work, the *Rebellion of the Individual*; his assurance (or illusion) of Freedom; and the attempts he makes to explain, to justify, to reconcile the Universe to himself, to express it in terms of himself (beyond this relative truth no Philosophy can claim to penetrate); and finally, for the guidance of his own practical life, to establish a *modus vivendi* with this inscrutable Power beyond him, whether the Divine Being as deliberate and beneficent Creator, or an unconscious Destiny. The main object of his search is a realm of unfettered action; and all apparently curious inquiry into Nature has in the end a practical motive (for example, the pursuit of Science may be con-

sidered as the highest and freest exercise of Human Reason). This quest takes its rise from a sense of restraint and insecurity, and a peculiar feeling of antagonism to things without, to environment; from a consciousness (more or less acute) of a necessary and abiding Dualism of Subject and Object. How shall we reconcile this alienation? How, in a word (to borrow the technical and dialectic, yet highly religious and ethical language of later Platonists), how did the One become the Many? How shall the Many again become the One? From this standpoint I attempt to estimate the hypotheses put forward to elucidate, or to reconcile; by general essays, in the first instance, of moderate length, unencumbered by many quotations. Afterwards these are to be supplemented, and (as I hope) confirmed by various minute inquiries, contributory to the main Thesis —the Search for the Individual's Freedom and Happiness, in a world not obviously calculated to ensure it.

Book One

THE HELLENIC AGE: PLATONISM AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

CHAPTER I

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE IONIC AND SOPHISTIC AGE: THE SEARCH FOR Φύσις, OR THE ULTIMATE REALITY

CHAPTER I

PART I.—THE AWAKENING OF THE INDIVIDUAL

§ 1. We have first to chronicle the signs of maturity in the Greek intellect, which took the form of a reaction against received doctrines, and in which each thinker claimed for himself the exclusive right to explain the Universe. The Sophistic movement in Greece, out of which arose Socrates and Plato, continued the revolt which the Physical School had inaugurated. The one tried to set free the audacious and enterprising spirit from the bondage of social duty, as the other from an impossible hypothesis of the word and its origin. But the significance of these earliest pioneers of speculation may very likely escape us. It scarcely appears obvious that the Ionian or Eleatic is engaged on the work of emancipating the personal. The selfishness of the Sophist and his avowed disregard of political morality, is clearly due to reaction against the narrow civism of petty Hellenic States. (Only later was it seen that the restrictions of outer Law were but an echo of conscience within, and not the will of the few stronger, or, as we may say to-day, the many weaker; at first all restraint was supposed to be pernicious to the bolder and more aspiring minds.) But we have to show that the investigation of Nature arose from the same craving for (or striving after) *personal freedom*, the same desire to create for oneself a formula to cover phenomena, and, as among

the Sophists, a law for one's own guidance in Society,—the masterful oppressiveness of a strong will. It is indeed Will, moving dully and, at present unconsciously among the disorderly heaps which form the material universe; scarcely yet awake, certainly not yet mature and self-sentient; but straining towards light and freedom, in that necessary quest of all rational beings, the Search for Happiness through Liberty, through unfettered action, through mastery of things arrived at by generalization and universal formula.

§ 2. Hitherto these now disintegrating atoms—each for itself, in a new-formed independence of outward control—had been held together by a certain impersonal Authority, an abstraction indeed, but one which wielded a very material sceptre, the κοινὸς λόγος, embodied, it may be, in a civic religion, State institutions, law and enactment, or the paternal rule of a single sovereign. The individual did not inquire whence this principle of authority had proceeded, what were its sanctions, whether he himself had contributed to the formation of the Social order, which bounded and controlled, while it protected him. As soon as he becomes, as we say, mature, self-conscious, he understands that this control is a reflection of his own wish: that the State is but the concrete realization of his own temper, and is imposed upon him with no higher sanction than this, that at one time he so desired it. *Scientific* inquiry is thus an independent and candid scrutiny of Nature, untrammelled by current and popular opinion. *Sophistic* is the attempt to subordinate the State to private ambition, and the Τυραννὶς is the actual manifestation of this spirit; which, as in most other movements, does not follow, but precedes its technical justification. In each case the single life, comprehending for the first time its dormant powers, demands that it shall be free and unrestrained in its

search for self-development; whether it claims to subjugate Nature, or a civic community, to its theories or caprices.

§ 3. Behind, then, these various movements of Intellect, curiously investigating all existence outside itself, is the hidden force, the real motive-power, of Will, uneasily conscious of a stubborn opposition, and seeking to subdue this by inventing a formula to explain it. A wider horizon is suddenly displayed to those hitherto immersed in animal life or in the routine of a petty State. The "Ego" is born, or rather becomes self-conscious, and begins to strain outwards to a larger communion, to more comprehensive relations with the world. The Ionian finds the object of Search in the Universe of physical reality, viewed as a concrete whole in all the varied modes of which the original substance was capable. The Sophist discovers his world to be himself, and his own immediate sensations; the dimensions of the great universe which the natural philosophers penetrate, shrivel up for him into nothingness, or the Unknowable: he is left alone with himself, and all other inquiry is valueless which does not bear upon personal ends and gratify personal ambition. In each case this has happened: a man becomes aware of his own isolations; conscious of an independent life apart from the State, and of faculties which are of interest in their exercise to himself alone. He separates his own life from the social body; and in the first thrill of liberty, regained or won for the first time, he wonders what this new spirit will bring forth, what delights it can create unknown to Convention; into what mysterious domains it will conduct him. Now the well-known feud between Philosophy and the State, decked out as it is with innumerable legends, arises entirely from this claim of the sage *to live for himself*. The Communal instinct or

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Collectivism (in its harshest form a sign of infancy or dotage) was indignant at this ingratitude, and accuses such a dissociating tendency of treason; nay, with indifferent success, attempted to recall the citizen of a wider Kingdom within the narrow boundaries of its own sphere; or else in States where a despotic regimen prevailed, the tyrant became exasperated at the calm demeanour of a sage, who acknowledged none of his laws, and professed indifference to his favour or his menaces. Philosophy is, in its true essence and first origin, then, *unsocial*. It lives apart in a world of its own; it is contemptuous of vulgar opinion, the tradition of priests, the code of aristocratic honour, and the truisms or the prejudices of orators and poets:—it claims to examine and choose for itself. It expresses itself, when once challenged by the ridicule of the mob, or the defiance of the powerful, in a tone of ever-increasing paradox. It takes no pains to conciliate the ignorant, it will not trouble to reform the world; it prefers to remain *consciously* superior; it is secure in the assurance of its own liberty and enlightenment. Quite in harmony with such an attitude is the *transient* attempt of the Sophists to use this to acquire political influence; and most significant of the bankruptcy of certain knowledge will be the later (and unnatural) alliance between Wisdom and Common Sense.

§ 4. Just at present, however, the sage shows none of these misgivings, is quite confident in his own unaided powers of deciphering and controlling. He approaches the physical Universe, and attempts to explain this larger empire of which he is by birthright a citizen, the immensity and grandeur of which has suddenly impressed him. And we are now face to face with a great problem, one which must be solved before we can appreciate the ancient mind, its difficulties or its development—what was the physical Universe, later styled the *Κόσμος*, on

which the variegated tribes of men and animals played their part, rapidly vanishing, only to reappear again on the endless tapestry? An answer to this question will explain the singular fact that early sages—curious about the outer world, yet only just emancipated from a mythic and credulous prejudice—concern themselves wholly with Creation (*as it is*), and for so long a period appear unaware of the formidable difficulty of the Creator; in a word, how completely unconnected with theology was this nascent thought of Asia Minor. To be candid, the words Creation and Creator are inadmissible. The Greeks, and indeed the Orientals too, knew nothing of Creation: of a world fabricated by a divine and designful artist. Their entire system of divinity, mythic legends and genealogies, always *presupposes the visible world*, the scene and the parent of the divine loves, jealousies, hatreds, wars, no less than of human passion in a lower sphere. So familiar to us is the notion of a Personal Deity calling order out of chaos, to be man's habitation and place of trial, that we find it difficult to believe that Plato, in the tentative myth of the Timæus, is the earliest to set forth this hypothesis. We may divide thinkers to-day into the two classes of Creationists and Evolutionists (nor, indeed, is a third class of combination wholly inconceivable),—those who believe in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, and maintain a more or less literal interpretation of their account of the world's origin; and those who dismiss the idea of *person* and *design* as we conceive them, and claim simply to trace the development of a universe from Nebula, or from some varying lowest terms or simplest elements, —without presupposing any deliberate plan or object,— denying, indeed, the possibility of discovering the Artificer of a scheme so wonderful, though not pledging themselves to the dogmatic assertion that such an Artificer

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does not exist. Now and again, as with the late Professor Huxley, this simple and limited inquiry into the stages of development (which, it must be clear, cannot possibly cut across or impugn a religious explanation of the order in Nature) is coloured with a melancholy pessimism; and boldly invading another realm from which the man of Science should consistently exclude himself, the philosopher re-echoes the language of Solomon, and definitely pronounces that the play of Evolution is aimless, unmoral, and full of pain and trouble to those whose very perfection (*οἰκεῖον ἔργον*, the exercise of Reason) brings only a consciousness of a miserable futility.

§ 5. The gods of whom we read, and whose mythology still forms part of our early education to-day, did not *explain* the world; the world preceded, and to a certain extent explained *them*. Superior to man, *immortal* (as the intelligence of those days understood eternal life), and *powerful* (but by no means omnipotent), the divine generations sprang from the womb of inscrutable Nature, that dark and mysterious source of life which every system, in presupposing, refused to investigate. The gods are regarded either as subordinate ministers, executing (sometimes in spite of themselves) the decrees of Fate or Necessity, or as semi-independent rivals, struggling in vain against them. Ordinary man, by no means able to escape the same thraldom, can yet secure by prayer or sacrifice the protection of local or national deities, a more or less efficacious shield against the darts of Necessity, or at least a possible defence worth the trying. For, as in the Oriental system of Brâhm, no effort was made to propitiate this ultimate Power; it was out of all relation to man, and could not be approached by him, unless he laid aside his humanity. (Here we see the germs of the later mystical and Impersonal development, of which at present there is but little trace.) In worship and

supplication, then, the attempt to conciliate the unseen and partial governors of the world (whether spirits of ancestors, or souls lurking within natural objects), the ancient sages recognised the strict and impassable limits of its efficacy. The favour of the sovereign of Olympus himself availed nothing against the decree of Destiny. Blind terror, panic, loss and oblivion of sex and self, marked the rare and secret occasions when, by impersonal rapture of orgiastic rite or inebriety, precarious offering or atonement was made to the hidden Source of Life. The wholesome devotion to the *persons* of the gods, in spite of their restricted powers, kept the Greeks, for the most part, from a worship which demanded loss of self and sacrifice of will; and retained them within the sober service of these weaker divinities;—nay (if we may recognise the deep truth, which J. S. Mill was perhaps the first to clearly enunciate), remained all the more faithful to their precarious protectors, just because they saw in them traces of their own infirmity and limited freedom, in defiance of the blind and meaningless doom of the ultimate power of Nature. Now it was to *this fundamental existence and* not *to the conception of the Divine*, that the bold or impious curiosity of Ionia first directed its attention. Only later were the two identified.

§ 6. One object of this free speculation on the Source or Ground of Life was to dissipate this unreasoning terror, which seizes men on the threshold of the Infinite, the Unknown, the Universal. The sage vindicates his independence, not only against the State, with its laws, customs, religion, prejudices, which he serenely disregards, but also against the essence of the Universe. Half conscious that, as *thinking*, *reflecting*, *judging*, he is superior to blind and arbitrary "Law" (though by no means yet formulating clearly that fruitful doctrine of

superiority), he begins without fear to examine that which popular Religion had refused to take account of, or had recoiled from in indefinable panic. Now, at the present day, it both astounds and shocks the pious Creationist to hear men deny that behind phenomena there lives a just and merciful Being, who built the world-system for the use of man and other spiritual natures. If this Supreme Creator be negated, the whole religious fabric, with all its consolation and encouragement, all its attendant train of Virtues and Moralities, tumbles to the ground,—overthrown by the single doctrine that the Final Power is neither bad nor good, but rather indifferent; that is, *impersonal*. In the Greek world, at the dawn of physical speculation, it was not thus;—the gods of Olympus, the minor tutelars of the wood and the stream, the ancestors whose care protected the State—with these, at first, no one proposed to interfere. The inquiry into the ultimate constitution of things seemed audacious indeed, but not a sign of extreme impiety. It is further noteworthy that the popular suspicions were not aroused until attention was called to a certain definite heavenly body, as a mere glowing mass; the tendency was pronounced clearly atheistical only when the people could appreciate a *particular* application: the *general* speculation excited but little animosity, although it implies an impugnment of Providence altogether, and made it impossible for the thoughtful man to reconcile himself to a Power which could not be expressed in terms of humane design, of a conscious Will.

§ 7. Of such a conception as this there is absolutely no trace until the time of Anaxagoras, when the notion of *Design* enters into cosmogonic speculation; *intellectual* design, significantly enough, occurring earlier to the Greek than the theory of a *beneficent* purpose. (It will be seen that the main importance of Socrates and Plato consists

in their *teleology*; and we shall note how the ambiguity of the latter as to goodness and purpose, leads immediately to the subjective isolation and despair of the schools of later Paganism.) The main problem of all modern philosophy,—the possibility of knowledge, the union or harmony of subject-object in cognition,—had not presented itself, as such, to these early men of science. To this sceptical or critical attitude their successors will be driven by the continual divergence of opinion on the Substrate or Material which forms the Universe; dogmas so various and irreconcilable, that the next age, or the Sophistic, will distrust all *objective* knowledge, and will rest quite contented with a *subjective* acquaintance with our own passing emotions and sensations, however mysteriously caused by the unknown agency without; and, insecure of all positive information about the world of Nature, will turn again to the surer and more comprehensible life in Society. It will, without committing itself to any principles of government, endeavour to make the best of social life, by gaining ἀρετή, by winning the esteem or the admiration of one's kind.

PART II. § 8. But I must take a fresh point of departure before I can fully set forth my opinion as to the ground-motive of the Ionian speculators. It must be granted that in all speculation, the secret impulse is invariably the Search for Happiness, or Self-Realization —the desire of the individual to explain and satisfy his own nature, seeing that of this nature and its moods or phases he has alone immediate and unavoidable experience. We have not clearly defined the inner motive of any philosophy, unless we see it in relation to the personal impulse. And allowing, as we must, that the *theoretical* problem of the Ground of Being stirred up the ingenious and restless Hellenic mind to analysis and inquiry, yet even this is a form of a *practical* difficulty

(or presupposes its solution). Wonder and bewilderment turned the eyes of the early Naturalists in the direction of familiar physical events; but the life of speculation and study of First Principles is subsequently only accepted, because it is decided (as a cardinal doctrine in the new religion) that Blessedness is attainable only through Knowledge. The stimulus, then, is a practical need, and the sage, whom we have seen determined to express the world for himself, and in his own terms, seeks a secure ground for his own personal well-being, and is first occupied in a search for the permanent, the immutable, the persistent, the eternal. Man at last becoming self-conscious, craves for a safer anchorage for his hopes than this visible world can supply. He ceases to "tell stories" about the time when there was nothing; he asks about the *present* state of this universe, and claims to discover the Abiding Substrate, which remains eternal at either end, uncreated and imperishable, amid the fleeting changes and apparent decay of its transient modes.[1] A certain melancholy sentiment broods over the Ionian speculations; at present almost untinged with *personal* repining. "Non fleo privatum sed generale chaos."[2] These philosophers identify themselves with the larger world, as yet unaware of their superiority to it, or of their birthright to a more permanent existence; their regrets are disinterested, unselfish complaints of the transience and instability of the modes of the Substrate, the vanity of this perpetual yet aimless transformation scene.

§ 9. In the full maturity of the conscious spirit, that is (I am afraid for Altruistic sentiment), when man becomes self-centred, he will cease to be sorry for changes in Nature, the ruin of a nation or a universe,

[1] I am indebted for this suggestive statement of the true significance of the Ionian movement to Mr. Burnett.

[2] Maximianus, *Eleg.*, v. 110.

so but his own soul is firmly rooted in the unchangeable and eternal; *si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinæ.* But as yet the craving for prolonged personal existence, in defiance of the seemingly natural law which brooks no exception, is weak among the Ionians, and only slowly emerges. Here, again, some caution is necessary. Though it would be futile to ignore the ultimate motive of all reflexion,—a desire for self-satisfaction,—yet the acute sense of *personality* (with which, for example, the Imperial age was oppressed, no less than Society to-day) is not found expressly acknowledged in earlier systems. Above all, the survival of a personal spirit formed, we may say, no part of the creed of the Hylozoist, who, indeed, as opposed to popular belief, demonstrated its impossibility. (Must we not candidly acknowledge that this abandonment of a *personal* hope is a striking feature in their speculations?) The early mythology had been *Atomic*; Animism had peopled nature with an infinite multitude of independent and spontaneous wills, capricious centres of Volition. Philosophy (to whose cold and impartial survey Will is the *Deus ex machinâ* of discredited superstition) refuses as a rule to have anything to do with Will as a possible explanation of the Universe; or admits it only in the last resort, and with ill-concealed irritation. Animism gives place to Hylozoism, in which the life, "hitherto supposed to reside in each particular thing, is transferred to a single substance," of which all the rest are but fleeting phases. Birth and decay (really meaningless in relation to this single substance), are but the exercise of the untiring activity of the one Ultimate Real, unborn and unceasing. The sentimental regret, brooding on the instability of things, receives a kind of pietistic consolation in the unvarying conviction, *Nothing is born, nothing dies; the Universe suffers no loss.* This

final and permanent thing is called *Φύσις*, and by degrees, as its majestic eternity impresses the mind, receives divine titles; first in Xenophanes and Parmenides, next in Empedocles, when Natural Science becomes implicated (or contrasted?) with a mysterious hieratic doctrine of metempsychosis; while in the Pythagorean rule of life—a combination of philosophy and barbarous laws of affinity and prohibition—an *ethical* purpose first displays itself. This search for the undying element, whose mysterious vicissitudes form the cosmic process, becomes tinged with religious and semi-moral notions; under the name of *Φύσις*, as a perfect sphere or globe, it is invested with divine honours and attributes; and, with this curious alliance of scientific positivism with superstitious custom and hieratic tradition, the unsatisfied souls betake themselves to the consolations of Religion.

§ 10. But let not this dimness of vision, and uncertainty in valuing the personal life, blind us to the real direction of the Ionic pathway. Man follows what he believes to be best *for himself*, and the question of an *absolute*, as opposed to this *relative*, good, requires a longer and more arduous discussion than we need enter upon at present. The physical speculator, turning to the problem of universal existence from partial or local explanations, does so at first, no doubt, by *instinctive* impulse, which he would find it difficult to describe or to justify. But his search for a stable element, for a final and abiding reality in this transitory world, soon receives the sanction of a *moral* motive, and appears as the result of a practical discussion on the best, the highest, or the most pleasing Life. Ignorance, to the Hellenic mind, is the greatest sinfulness and impiety, and unless we realize their strange abhorrence of unconscious guilt, of innocent and (to us) irresponsible error, we shall not understand their constant and puzzling involution of Speculation and

Ethics, of the *theoretical* and the *practical*; *to them the pursuit of knowledge becomes the highest moral duty.* Now, in connection with this subject, another fundamental difference between the ancient and modern world will become clear. In the Christian system, man (as well as God) in virtue of a moral will (irrespective of its power or realization) is placed *over against the world* of Nature, with which he has contact only on one, and that his lower, side. In spite of a certain optimistic Pantheism, recently prevalent, this opposition between the Natural and the Moral is the foundation of the entire Christian system, from which it can only be dissociated by violation of the words of Scripture; it is, besides, the starting-point of men of science, when, with indifferent success, they attempt to bridge over the gulf between facts and duties, or explain the difference between Physical and Moral constraint. To certain joyous temperaments this antagonism will seem impiety; but the enthusiast has rarely an adequate knowledge of human nature; nor is the absolute harmony between body and spirit so immediately expected by us to-day as by the "Enlightenment" of a hundred years ago. Experience and common sense have abandoned the glorious prophecies of redeemed humanity —delivered from "the only source of evil," external control.

§ 11. But to the earliest philosophers this view of man as struggling with Nature, in entire disagreement with her laws and processes, was unknown. He believed that the Universe was reconciled to man, and man to the Universe (both in *knowledge* and *action*), by acquaintance with *Φύσις*,—Nature, that is, as it appears to the reflecting mind, the world without, with which, by a hasty process, this reflecting mind itself was involved, and indeed identified. To have ascertained the primeval Substrate, out of which, itself eternal and undecaying, the innumerable and transient universes of Ionian

speculation were evolved—this was to know human nature and its place in the great whole. To this conception of Nature the Stoic and the Cynic revert. We find in them an implicit belief in the original *perfection* (not *perfectibility*) of the human race, from which man falls by immersion in the prejudices and traditions of Society, whether taught or inherited. To regain this lost state of innocent happiness (as we might paraphrase, admittance to the Garden of Eden, from whence we have exiled ourselves), we require only to study Nature and see for what purpose she "who does nothing in vain" has intended us. The main text of the avowedly subjective era is ζῆν ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει, put forth as an axiom by Stoic, Epicurean, Sceptic, Cynic. The Stoic, beginning from *external* nature, as supplying full guidance and encouragement for man's moral life, will gradually tend to emphasize rather the inner, subjective, so-called "God within,"—the conscience of a heroic pessimism. The Cynic frankly proposes, with Rousseau, to go back to the woods and acorns of primitive savagery, thus displaying his conviction that man's unnatural development is due to the baneful exercise of Reason and Reflexion. The Epicurean will not offend quite so severely the social instinct, but yet confines his civic duties to a narrow circle of friends; finding his "true nature" best realized in cultivated retirement, prudent pleasures, and the amenities of amicable intercourse. The Sceptic believes (as the *positive* part of his creed) that the common sense of *society* supplies the criterium, rather than the subjective impulse of the *individual*.

§ 12. Nothing is more worthy of note than the ambiguity of the use of Φύσις throughout: Is it *our* nature, or the *universal* nature, which is to be our guide? At present, however, in Ionic speculation, the sense of antagonism is not yet acute. The instinctive discontent

arising commendably in the human heart at this mean position assigned to a creature so superior to the rest, will soon turn back the gaze at first outward bent, and will assure the thinker that man is above natural law, that he is in continual combat with it, that his true home is not in the world of seeming, but in some distant and invisible kingdom called the world of Thought, the *Νοητὸς Τόπος*, or, as later, the Kingdom of Heaven; in a word, the nature of *man* will be set over against the nature of the *whole*. At present, the individual, scarcely yet fully conscious of his infinite possibilities, demands nothing more than to be himself a mere manifestation of some great Law. To this pitiful supineness all decadent and pantheistic systems return, in the despair of personality, which, unable to stand alone, finds its chief joy in losing itself. As the submission becomes more and more humble and absolute, the personal spirit rebels against this constraint, fights against Fate like Ajax, defies the popular traditions as Anaxagoras, questions a superficial morality as Socrates, or finally, in the most splendid instance of self-will (but which, significantly enough, is a failure from the side of happiness), discards the sanction of patriotism, as Alcibiades. At this moment, however, we are at the first and earliest stage, before the appearance of this conscious dualism, although it must be confessed that the melancholy sentiment of Heraclitus gives warning of this future spirit of discontent and hostility.

§ 13. It has been well said:—"The Search after *Φύσις*" (the permanent and abiding element beneath the continual change of phenomena), "first in the world at large, next in human society, becomes the chief interest in this age."[1] Greek philosophy began, as it ended, in the

[1] Mr. Burnett, in his clear and quite indispensable book on the Pre-Socratics.

Search for what was lasting and immutable in the flux of things. What is Universal *Φύσις*? This is the earliest question; and, after a host of dissonant answers, the final reply to Thales is given (so far as it could then be final) in the Atomism of Leucippus. A more practical party, for whom the life of political success and influence had not lost its charm, examines the *Φύσις* of the State, which hitherto had engrossed and enchained the single life. Was it not possible to reverse this, and to employ the machinery of the city for a merely personal ambition and selfish aim? In spite of its suspicious symmetry, the volume of M. de Coulanges, *La cité Antique*, has at least brought clearly to light the transcendental and religious, or, if you will, the *personal*, sanction and motive on which were founded the stupendous demands of the ancient State upon its citizens. It should be useful reading to-day for those who are naïvely recommending a return to mere secular patriotism, and dilating upon the charms of a painful yet aimless self-sacrifice to an abstraction. For this instinctive love of country, based mainly upon self-interest and the doctrine of the Soul's Immortality, broke down before the materialism which Ionian speculation introduced. The only philosophy which recognised and elevated the older tradition (which seems inseparable from unreflecting human nature) was the system of Pythagoras, in whom this dogma assumed a new significance. But the usual comparisons of the soul or principle of life in Man to various material objects, which were easily dissipated and dissolved, led in the Sophistic movement to a reaction in favour of a brilliant and tumultuous secular existence, no longer indeed in the coldness of natural speculation, but in the more vivid though restricted sphere of social, educational, political success.

Book One

THE HELLENIC AGE: PLATONISM AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

CHAPTER II

GRADUAL QUALIFICATION OF A SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE: THE *ONE* RISES OUT OF, AND BECOMES CONTRASTED WITH, THE *MANIFOLD*; AND IS PRONOUNCED SUCCESSIVELY DIVINE, INTELLIGENT, AND GOOD

world, the mode in which (as these guesses became more frequent and their disagreement more startling) knowledge, as ascertainment of fact, entered the thinking mind,—arise from a *practical* sense of doubt and loneliness, a pathetic consciousness of insufficiency, driven back upon a purely subjective explanation of things. It will be noticed that the various branches of knowledge keep pace, and in a sense correspond, with each other. Earliest is the claim to free thought in the study of Nature, a rebellion against current mythology, but, so far as ethics was concerned, reposing still upon an unquestioned and childlike morality. The effect of free and independent thought was scarcely foreseen; belief in the trustworthiness of *knowledge* (by which these various and hostile systems were elevated with equal plausibility) is the next subject of discussion; and finally, the *moral* nature of man, and his duties as a citizen, are examined coldly and without presupposition. Everything in this age is called in question; and, in the prevailing disintegration, when Atoms governed by Chance or Fate (it matters not what we call a power finally inscrutable) is the favourite physical hypothesis, Subjectivity is the law in *logic* and in *morals*. The Personal Spirit has become the ultimate standard; a centrifugal age has succeeded to a centripetal.

§ 2. When we look out upon the Universe, there are two ways in which it may strike us; and this difference (not to seek idly for abstruse reasons) will depend mainly upon our temperament. As a *whole*, or as a *collection* of *parts*; as *one* or *many* (the later stage of this argument), as *existing* or as *becoming*, as a single permanent condition, or as a series of successive and transient states. The Universe—do we look at it in its eternal stability, or as perpetually passing away, eluding our grasp and our formula, which tries to bind

together the slippery details? What is in our view the main characteristic?

The extreme Right and Left of this debate are represented by the Eleatics, and by that tendency of which the Atomists are the latest and the clearest exponents; *one* and *many*; both of whom boldly proclaimed their own exclusive dogma, sheer and obstinate, confronting the other; and it must be noticed that, in reaching their ultimate principle or principles, both parties transcend the sphere of sense, and appeal, not indeed to *spiritual* essences (still less to *moral* motives or agents), but to things about which sense gives no message. For the conclusions of Parmenides and Leucippus are both opposed to common experience; the universe of everyday life (and this it was they tried to explain) is neither an immobile crystalline ball hanging in vacancy; nor, again, a congeries of dissociate Atoms, perpetually repelling each other, or uniting only to dissolve again.

§ 3. Heraclitus completes the older or unconscious Ionian School in the face of the strenuous dogmatism of Elea. For Philosophy does not in truth begin until opinions are examined and confirmed by defence against attack. The quarrel has scarcely yet taken the later form of *one* and *many*; but is between *being* and *becoming*, between one eternal and immovable substance and a succession of perishable worlds. Heraclitus unites both, and affirms that the world is composed of Fire; that the law of Being is not perpetual rest, but perpetual motion, ἄνω καὶ κάτω, in perpetual antithesis.

But the problem that pressed on Heraclitus was not so much the composition of the world,—the ἀρχή, in the sense of permanent substrate, traversing all possible phases,—but rather the αἴτιον κινήσεως, αἴτιον μίξεως, the *cause* of this multiple experience, which Reason may refuse to call reality, but which Sense (and common sense

besides) is forced to acknowledge. Already there are two worlds standing over against one another: that which Reason speaks of as eternal and immobile, and that which sense tells us of—a river rushing by, washing our feet with waves that pass and elude us as we try to count them: a theory so disintegrating and unsettling that Atomism at once follows—Atomism, which recognises a myriad infinity of independent monads, governed by no law and held together by no common principle.

(So then this division of the Universe, so clearly made by Parmenides the earliest Greek philosopher,—the world of Being and Reason, of Becoming and Sense,—lands us at once in Logic: in the *Problem* of *Knowledge*, its origin, nature, and limits. Yet at present must we keep clear of this engrossing inquiry, and examine not the *method* itself, but its *results*.)

§ 4. *The question now is not* what? *but* how *and* why? The early Ionians had given tentative answers to the question of *series*—of the successive states or conditions of *Φυσις*: it was done by *πιλωσις*, *πυκνωσις*, *ἀραιωσις*, just as in modern science we explain everything in a fashion (when certain axioms beyond the reach of proof are once granted): but the query of final importance, who began it? How did the Many rise from the bosom of the One? What is the ultimate *ἀρχὴ κινησεως*?—this occurs later, when the independent reality of the rival worlds of Reason and Sense is acknowledged, but not as yet reconciled or explained.

Heraclitus and Empedocles attempt a semi-physical interpretation of the Final Cause of this heterism, couched in the language of allegory. Fire has irresistible desire: *Φιλια* and *Νεικος*, Love and Hate, by their interaction, occasion the visible and changeful world. It will be noticed that by this entrance of metaphorical language, we are getting back to the old Anthropopsychic views. It will be seen (and this perhaps is the main purport of

greater and increasing knowledge of his own requirements. A naïve and simple philosopher in this century imagined that when we knew *that*, we should cease to inquire further *why?* It is a question whether we have reached the stage of Positivism, that is, contentment with experience and facts; certainly the Greeks in that age had not. Anaxagoras seemed satisfied with saying, "The world in its manifold variety is ordered and disposed by *Noûs*, by abstract intelligence," and appeared unaware of the further inevitable query, "For what object did *Noûs* take this trouble, breaking the serene life of eternal Blessedness?" (with such language Eleatic writings had made men familiar). What is the *motive* of the world-process? What in it is the place and mission of man? Just as the pursuit of *knowledge* receives a kind of *moral* and religious sanction at this time, so it was considered unfinal to say: God worked in *reason*; human inquisitiveness goes on to ask: For what purpose? And the answer is supplementary, for *good*; and thus we reach teleological views, and a modified anthropopsychism.

§ 7. For gradually the Final Reality was clothed with divine attributes, and indeed, if truth were told, with more and more human qualifications; and this, be it noticed, rather in virtue of Faith than as a result of actual experience, or unprejudiced Reasoning about things capable of proof. To the end of time, as it appears, it will always remain the same. The final *optimistic* qualification of the results of Science—the world as the work of a benign artificer, on which hypothesis our whole moral and religious, nay, our social existence, would seem to depend—is an act of religious faith. *Φύσις* is sought for; *Φύσις* is divided into a transient and precarious world of semblance, detected by the *sense*, and a true Region of Being and Truth, attained by *thought*. And

by degrees (though the quest started in absolute and entire independence of Theology), this latter is identified with God, and so worshipped and adored; it is the birth of pagan monotheism through, and out of, Pantheism.

§ 8. Xenophanes is the first to mingle physical inquiry with the language of theology and even of devotion; and this is continued by Parmenides and Empedocles. Anaxagoras further defines this Ultimate Cause, now dissociated from contact with material objects (which are now left indifferently [1]) to multiplicity. Religion has nothing whatever to do with the details of rival schemes of natural science; it concerns itself only with the question, Why? Anaxagoras attributes *Reason* to the final cause. Here is a distinct advance, and it is, moreover, an advance in defining God in terms of man, to which true religion, as it would appear, is always tending. We have no longer the crude anthropomorphism which startled and disgusted Xenophanes; we have the higher human quality of intelligent and designful arrangement, —in a word, a Universal Providence (however dimly Anaxagoras may have appreciated the significance of his own addition).

Here we have the *qualification* of the old indifferent Abyss or Ground, *Φύσις*, after which Ionian speculation inquired. It is all very well to say: There it is, the concrete visible world, and these are the steps by which the world develops from a primary substance; but Philosophy does not (as our first chapter showed) want to know the extent of Necessity's realm, but seeks rather the domain of Freedom; and by an effort of Reason (I

[1] A unity has been attained out and beyond and above the fleeting world; there is no longer any interest or motive in insisting on a single eternal material substance. The One is found elsewhere, and its qualification and determination now occupies philosophers; and this, independently of its assumed contact with matter—the world as we have it.

had almost said a *moral* effort) invests this final cause with the noblest quality of which man is possessed—intelligence.[1]

§ 9. But is this enough? No; a further and distinctly ethical motive must be introduced; and this is done by Socrates and Plato. And now we notice a singular ambiguity, which, as we believe, accounts for the entire subsequent course of Philosophy in the Subjective or Egoist Schools. There is in Plato a certain haziness about the term, Good. Is it a principle or a person? Is it absolute or relative? Is it indefinitely good, or is it good to *me*? What is the final purpose of Creation? Is it to display the power, the beauty if you like, the *goodness* (in an unusual sense) of a Creator? But this answer scarcely adds anything to our former Anaxagorean qualification of Intelligence; and goodness is otiose, and its meaning, upon further scrutiny, evaporates. "Good, but we cannot tell how." That is the answer of pious teleology. But what grounds have we for supposing the Final Cause to be beneficent? If we have certain acknowledged reasons in the domain of the *Known*, of experience, we can with joyful trust refer the *Unknown* to the same category of "goodness," in its true sense.

§ 10. But the explanations of the Universe current at this time were not anthropocentric, in spite of the prevailing desire for a justification of the ways of Nature to the single soul.[2] All through this pre-Christian age

[1] This hasty introduction of Thought as the paramount virtue of the only Real Being will dominate in all subsequent Philosophy, and invade and metamorphose the Christian Religion itself! Greek philosophy, in particular, to an extraordinary degree overvalues the influence of Thought: Thought is supposed to account for a material creation, and *knowledge* is believed (in man) to be invariably followed by right *action*.

[2] From which instinctive desire, and from no other motive, arises all *practical* (perhaps, also, all *theoretical*) Philosophy; always, in a sense, a Theodicy, a vindication or an impugnment of the "ways of Providence."

the explanation of enigmas, the guide of life, is sought from *Φύσις*; and, after the brief transcendentalism of Plato and Aristotle (the doctrine of a God out of relation to the individual), *Φύσις* is very generally divinized, in a sort of reaction, and a discovery of its laws and character is supposed to lead to Virtue and Happiness. But this way lies disillusion and despair; or in some minds, a frank and light-hearted cynicism arises, taking form in a determination to enjoy the present good, as the Final Power, whose holy name Providence is seen to be a solemn mockery and imposture, is unaccountable, incognoscible, certainly unmoral; and the sage is driven back upon his own resources or his own sensations.

§ 11. The "*Goodness*" of God so unceasingly predicated of the Supreme Principle by Plato, as a fundamental axiom in his philosophy, needed some better evidence than Common Experience can provide. Was it so clear after all that the Universe is good? Or is it so clear to-day? It is man, individual man, who bears the brunt of the warfare of the *Κόσμος*, the ceaseless animosity, by which it lives and is sustained; he is entitled to understand its final import, and its relation to his own welfare. In such noble natures, by a distinct moral effort (an *instinctive* rather than a purely *rational* effort),[1] the Universe is pronounced good, the Creator beneficent and merciful, and the single life professes the utmost satisfaction with the ways of Providence, and entire submission to its decrees, however inscrutable.

But to others who are more exacting, more practical, less inclined to such mystic and emotional complacence, this blind disregard of the plain facts of experience, this

[1] Though it cannot be questioned that such an act of *Faith* implies the exercise of *Reason* in its highest sense,—a term frequently misused, exclusively in an inferior sense, as a calculating process, depending upon visible and actual proof.

glozing of euphemistic titles, seems profoundly unsatisfactory. Philosophy gradually restricts itself down into the never-ending discussion of two questions only: the possibility of Knowledge, the origin of Evil. Aristotle no longer insists upon the vigour and personal interest of the Creator in his work; indeed, belief in a deliberate creation vanishes from Greek thought again, after the brief but brilliant presentation of the *Timæus*. The centre of gravity is altered, from a Good Creator outside the world, to *Φύσις* again, the world itself, and its (incognoscible) implanted yearnings after the ideal; the *One* and the *Many* are again (to all intents and purposes) involved and implicated: Aristotle restates Heraclitus.

§ 12. And in further continuation of this process, the post-Aristotelian Schools of Egoism, though in quest of *Φύσις* and its laws, do so for their own personal advantage, and limit their inquiries strictly to *practical* needs. The sage's world is his own mind,—his body and senses are given over to the realm of Necessity; only his inner spirit is free, and, indeed, divine; thus the consolatory doctrine, immanent rather than explicit, in Platonism, comes again to light,—the indwelling or abiding of the Divine in the Soul of man, which is significant of the Roman Stoicism, now closely allied with Emotional Platonism.

By this means a certain relation can be brought about between God and the self. The somewhat audacious postulate of *Goodness* in the Final Principle is indeed justified in the inward rapture, the prayerful ecstasy, the blissful sense of communion, nay, of union and identity, with God. But as yet this confidence and joyful submission is confined to the personal experience of the saint or sage; (nor is it in him unmingled with certain sad hours of despair, of doubt, of reaction, of a sense of loneliness and desertion,)—it cannot be made

a creed, it cannot form the basis of a universal or a national religion; it is incapable of proof or evidence (save of this subjective type), and remains the celestial grace, the incommunicable privilege of a few who retire from the problem of intellectual life or the task of the improvement of mankind.

Book One

THE HELLENIC AGE: PLATONISM AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

CHAPTER III

THE SPIRIT OF SOPHISTIC SUBJECTIVITY; ITS CAUSES, ERRORS, JUSTIFICATION

CHAPTER III

PERVERSION OF THE ANAXAGOREAN PRINCIPLE: THE SOPHISTS COMBINE ATOMISM WITH THE DOCTRINE OF SOVEREIGN *Noûs* (IN A SUBJECTIVE SENSE)

§ 1. THERE can, I think, be no question that Socrates was stirred up to his task of reconstruction by the evil effects (as he conceived it) of the Sophistic parody of the Anaxagorean doctrine. "Intelligence governs, as it has created, the world. True, but whose intelligence?" Anaxagoras had failed to distinguish *human* from *animal* intelligence, and had actually placed the superiority of man in his possession of two hands; so unconscious was he of the far-reaching significance of his own innovation. Now the widespread distrust of objective reality abroad at this time, allying itself with the famous dictum, *Noûs ἐλθὼν διεκόσμησεν αὐτὰ*, becomes Sophistic. Pursuing, as we do, the course of Greek thought from the *practical* and religious side, and leaving the *theoretical* and absorbing problem of Knowledge for later discussion, I yet cannot deny the potent influence of this theoretical *σκέψις* upon the behaviour and teaching of a disintegrating society. As we have seen, owing to the peculiar notions about creation and the genesis of the gods, a naive hylozoism was entirely innocent of impiety: both Thales and Heraclitus insist that all things are full of gods; there was, in such speculation, nothing to shock popular religious feeling (in strong contrast to its immediate

effect to-day). Elea begins a polemic against these gods or demons of the current mythology, and attaches holy names to the Blessed Sphere; (Empedocles, in a brilliant yet inconsistent system, maintaining both the priestly legends and a scientific Monism.) But the progress of doubt in the veracity of human cognition is accompanied by mistrust in the nature of this ultimate Ground of Being; or, to speak the truth, after a brief period of adoration by a sentimental and paradoxical school, under the Atomists the Cause of all existence is again (as in the old religious systems of India and Greece) a dark inscrutable and mysterious Power, working in natural objects blindly and without design. It was called *Τυχὴ* or *Ἀνάγκη*, and is the final principle, as such unknowable by man, even as Brâhm is.[1]

In face of an incognoscible reality like this, men's behaviour will assume one of two forms, according to temperament in each. The mystical mind (itself almost always the offspring of Scepticism) will neglect the variable and transient things,—that fleet by and irritate our senses to a vain quest of their illusive attractions,—and will turn to the one Real, living in and for it alone: the practical mind, recognising the uselessness of such pretence at communion with abstractions, will clutch eagerly at even these phantoms of a bright and variegated existence; and when the doctrine is put forward, that Mind makes order and harmony among chaos, will

[1] Erdmann, § 47: "They (the Atomists) agree with Empedocles that Necessity (*Ἀνάγκη, Δικὴ, Εἱμαρμένη*) regulates these minglings and separations. This, too, may have been the fiery word-soul which, according to an old account, Democritus declared to be the Deity. But since this power regulating the atoms is not immanent, and, according to Aristotle, acts not naturally, but by force, it has not unjustly been called Chance. . . . Those who attribute to Democritus a teleological point of view as well, forget that, in opposition to Anaxagoras, he expressly maintains a *Φύσις ἄλογος*."

delightedly accept this justification of personal and self-centred cleverness, of the right which each man has to express Nature (the unknown) as he feels and wishes, and to impose (so far as this serves his purpose) his peculiar and personal views on others.

§ 2. Anaxagoras may be deemed the scientific exponent of a philosophy whose immediate practical result is given in Sophistic. The character of this *Νοῦς*, proclaimed the sovereign of all things, is not yet investigated; it remains for Socrates to examine and to expose this subjective cleverness, which would interpret the world according to its desire, elevate the "wise" into an immoral supremacy, believe that "all things exist only to be mastered by him," whether in *practice* or in *theory*, idolize what Heraclitus calls disease, the subjective impression, and maintain, with Gorgias, that "since all objective reality disappears, it is left open to the subject to represent everything just as he pleases."[1] Now Socrates arises to combat this extreme subjectivity, and to seek for a norm of action by striving to reach a criterium of knowledge; there can be no doubt that he arrives at the *practical* through the *theoretical*; but the earnest and *practical* purpose is apparent in every one of his seemingly dialectical arguments. Was it true that nothing could be known of the Final Power, which Anaxagoras called *Νοῦς*? He suggests that it might be called *good*; that it worked not only for an end, but for a good end, that is, for an aim intelligible and relative to the subject; that men could ascertain this by talking and

[1] We may note in passing:—Socrates saw that this objective reality —on the valid existence of which our knowledge and our ethical life depended—could only be obtained by a brilliant comprehensive generalization of the whole known world as tending to good, as animated by a divine and merciful purpose; not by minute inquiries into the parts of nature, or invention of subtle dialectic, or gorgeous pageantry of language.

discussing together in pursuit of Truth (which he still believed attainable), rather than in listening to the misrepresentations of eloquent vanity. We are apt to think, in the technical terminology of Socratic Logic, that mere curiosity, a desire for *abstract* Truth, for accurate conceptions, animates the inquiry: there is a much more serious motive; though the search for Truth becomes a Moral duty, though Virtue *is* Knowledge,—behind the logic of Socrates lies Duty, Ethics, Religion. Before proceeding to scrutinize the fundamental tenets of Socrates, placed as far as possible in a *practical* light, rather as moral than speculative (if indeed these can ever be successfully separated), it may be of use to cite an interesting passage of Philo, *De Sacrificantibus*, § 14, in which *Νοῦς* (so soon to be used only of the Divine) is made to represent selfishness, conceit, and egoism, and, as such, expelled from the service of the Sanctuary: *Ἀμφότεροι γὰρ ζηλωταὶ μεγάλου κακοῦ φιλαυτίας ὄντες, ὥσπερ τινα κοινὴν οὐσίαν διενείμαντο τὴν ὅλην ψυχήν, ἐκ Λογισμοῦ κ. Ἀλόγου μέρους συνεστῶσαν. Καὶ οἱ μὲν τὸ λογικόν, ὃ δὴ Νοῦς ἔστι, διεκληρώσαντο, οἱ δὲ τὸ ἄλογον, ὅπερ εἰς τὰς αἰσθήσεις τέμνεται. Οἱ μὲν οὖν τοῦ Νοῦ προστάται τὴν ἡγεμονίαν κ. βασιλείαν τῶν ἀνθρωπείων πραγμάτων ἀνάγουσιν αὐτῷ*,—praising it as able to preserve the past in memory, to take hold boldly of the present, and, by reasonable conjecture, to anticipate the future. This is the power which sowed the earth, and planted it, and discovered agriculture: *Οὗτος ὁ τὸν οὐρανὸν κατασκευάσας κ. τὴν χέρσου φύσιν παντὸς λόγου ἐπινοίαις κρείττοσι πλωτὴν ἐργασάμενος.*[1]

This power invented letters and music and cyclic

[1] Here is an interesting confusion between Divine Creation (in an Anaxagorean formula), to which the language *seems* to refer, and the cleverness of individual reflexion, as appearing to "create" the objects of thought and sensible experience.

training, and brought these arts to perfection: *πρὸς τὸ τέλος ἤγαγε*, illustrated in § 16: *Ἐπείγονται γὰρ πάντες οὗτοι πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ, εἰ καὶ μὴ ἀπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν ἄγονται βουλευμάτων* = self-interest and personal advantage.

This, too, begat Philosophy, greatest of all blessings, and thus all its parts assisted human life: *διὰ μὲν τοῦ λογικοῦ πρὸς ἀνεξαπάτητον ἑρμηνείαν, διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἠθικοῦ πρὸς τὴν τῶν τρόπων ἐπανόρθωσιν, διὰ δὲ τοῦ Φυσικοῦ, πρὸς ἐπιστήμην οὐρανοῦ τε κ. κόσμου. Καὶ ἄλλα μέντοι παμπλήθη λέγουσιν ἐγκώμια Νοῦ συμφορήσαντές τε κ. ἀγείραντες.*

§ 3. The result is, that after the interrogation of the Sophists,—"You mean, we presume, *my* personal *Νοῦς*, *my* cleverness, influence, ingenuity,"—some further qualification is needed before this Axiom can be accepted as a safe guide. Physical inquiries, and the not unnatural Scepticism thereby engendered, now turn their solvent of doubt on the practical life of the citizen, and menace the Solidarity of the State. What is required is a more critical and sensible definition of *Νοῦς*, the new power, and this arrived at, not by consulting a selfish dogmatic subjectivity, a strong and dominating intelligence imposing itself and its system on the many weaker; but by a return to a principle, implicit in Heraclitus, and long afterwards revived by the Imperial Sceptics,—the *κοινὸς λόγος* attained by impartial and unprejudiced discussion, *σὺν δύο ἐρχομένω*. It is not exclusively my *νοῦς*, nor your *νοῦς*, viewed as *peculiar*, individual, particular, idiosyncratic, with the eccentric and exceptional points emphasized. It is the *common* element in the *νοῦς* of both, purified from its mere subjectivity, and made universal; this is only discovered by mutual parley, whereby alone the veils of prejudice are withdrawn, the mists of ignorance dispelled. This principle (and nothing more in the world, whether mystical or dialectical) lies

behind the often perplexing accounts of the Socratic method. If we torture this simple and intelligible object into a search for universals, for concepts, for logical abstractions, the whole earnest and moral purpose of the man is disguised. Let us examine it without employing the much-abused vocabulary of Logic. But before all things, let us acknowledge the permanent contribution which we owe to Sophistic teaching—a doctrine eagerly welcomed and, to some extent, corrected by Socrates, and never forgotten by any true philosopher in all subsequent times. The subject, the person, the individual (all uncouth but indispensable names) is now mature, and fully self-conscious. He claims to judge, to interpret, the universe from his own *theoretical* point of view; to master, to control, it to his own ends, from a *practical*. He demands that the Scheme of the Final Power, called Providence, Fortune, Fate, Necessity, Chance, shall be justified in its treatment of him, before his own inward tribunal; or else it shall be given over to total nescience, indifference, contempt. He interrogates with equal calmness the rights of the State over his freedom; he demands his full independence, his complete emancipation, from God and his fellows. The wise man is alone and faces the rest of the world, though as yet scarcely aware how great is the hostility it bears to him.

§ 4. I cannot avoid saying here a few words upon this rebellion of the personal spirit, which is the mark of complete manhood, the origin of all speculative thought, the impulse to all active improvement—which is first clearly found in undisguised and contemptuous opposition to all customary convention in this general tendency called Sophisticism, or Atomism translated into an ethical creed. We call the Chinese civilization immature, because the sense of *individuality* there is not

yet awakened, but lies sleeping—buried in the torpor of immemorial tradition, and bound with the fetters of unreflecting civic morality. Man is here almost an automaton, a puppet, guided by the unseen influences of ancestral example, the spirit of the State, inherited tendencies: he has all but lost his gift of spontaneous initiative. It is the duty of a community to take care of itself; that is, to control the dangerous outbursts of subjectivity, to beware lest it be rearing a snake-like enemy of its peace in its own bosom, the genius of an Alcibiades, the most brilliant practical type of the success (or the failure) of Sophistic. But, on the other hand, it is the natural and unconquerable *impulse* of the single life to struggle after freedom; (I do not repeat in this connection the portentous word *Duty*, because I am not yet satisfied that it is admissible.) So the two ends are opposed to one another; and while the dull, brutish, unreasoning mass is satisfied with security and control, the more eccentric spirits are in revolt against State-restraint, whether in matter speculative or practical: and the extreme of subjectivism, a doctrine so innocent and childlike in Rousseau, is found in the militant Anarchy of our modern day. Whenever man, after a long unconscious lethargy (often pointed to as a classical epoch, a Golden Age of spontaneous art, unreflecting peace, or glorious collectivist achievement), finds *himself* again, and measures everything by reference to his own inclination, great dangers arise for the tottering fabric of the State. But often the terror of the majority condemns the bold philosopher and the sceptical divine to silence, the ambitious statesman to exile or inactivity. The weaker, being *many*, are often able to subdue the *one*, who has only himself to rely upon, and his own power of persuasion. Again, we see (not without inner satisfaction at the success of Egoism) the walls of the old citadel of

Tradition scaled by the adventurous freethinker, or the bold political reformer. The individual, moved instinctively to follow his restless impulse, will "work out his own salvation," not only desiring to commit with impunity vulgar acts of petty larceny, but to attain that noblest of ends, self-realization. From this impulse proceed the noblest and the basest acts in human history. Love of self, knowledge of self (the *Φιλαυτία* of Philo's anathema), as it is the cause of all misery and failure, is also in its true sense the source of all good. We have to correct, not inhibit or annihilate, the Subjective Spirit.

§ 5. Indeed, such an attempt would be utterly futile, and one cannot help being amused at certain modern reformers who look forward (as they say with complacence) to the suppression of the unit in the interests of the whole; and our wonder increases when they plead, further, for a "cheerful or voluntary self-effacement," and appeal pitifully, under pain of the most terrible vengeance (such is the paradox of the modern age) to the person, that he should permit himself to become a limb of an organism, instead of an end in himself, to forego rights which are his by nature, inheritance, or political concession. This system did not act in the past; and there is no reason to suppose it can act in the future. Human nature remains unchanged; and the spirit of rebellion against incomprehensible Law (which does not take the trouble to justify itself to the individual, and in relation to him) is, we may hope for the benefit of human kind, as keenly alive as ever. There is, besides the lesson of the past, another reason for supposing that the impulse of Egoism will survive, perpetually menacing the stability of States. "I mean, the disappearance of certain powerful sanctions of impulsive patriotism and dutiful self-sacrifice which

may have prevailed in the ancient world, but which it is folly to hope to revive to-day. Purely secular education, as a rule, makes a student self-centred, not humanitarian; for, after all, there is no reality but consciousness of self, no ultimate test of a religion or a science, or even of an altruistic theory, but the satisfaction felt by the personal spirit. It is useless, in defiance of facts, to talk idly about a law of universal Duty, the beauty of self-forgetfulness; "life in and for the race," as an efficient substitute for the old religious motives: the spirit of Egoism will summon all such sanctions into court, and examine coldly and critically the imposture upon which they rest, namely, the hypothesis that the world was made for the human race, and not for the individual man. True self-denial for the sake of others is only possible when man is convinced that his own personal welfare and ultimate happiness is in safe keeping. The unselfish temper cannot survive apart from the assurances of the Christian religion.

§ 6. But this further sanction, on which the morality of the ancient world reposed securely enough—what was it? The belief in the survival and influence of spirits; in a word, in the doctrine of *personal* immortality. In spite of a certain suspicion of its elaborate symmetry, M. de Coulanges' great work on the *Ancient State* (perhaps the best introduction to the study of antiquity) brings clearly to light these two facts,[1]—that Social Law was founded on transcendental and non-secular postulates, and that the individual was consulting his own higher interests by sacrificing immediate pleasure or profit, interests not confined within the term of human life.

But from the total disappearance of such views (with which to-day we are threatened), what can result but additional infirmity to a principle already weak enough?

[1] This has also been noticed above, p. 44.

The golden dreams of the French Revolution in its early days, the hopes of the obsolete Liberalism of the Reform Bill, display in a striking fashion the danger of *à priori* speculation about the nature of man, and the rashness of arguing from fine sentiments to noble deeds. Both these parties, consecrating themselves to the advance of a *cause*, take their stand upon an ideal conception of human nature: corresponding to the "gorgeous equipment" of man before the fall, of which theologians tell us; or to the perfection and impeccability of the regenerated or converted in certain Methodist schools. But to-day we are rid of this harmful myth of the natural goodness of original man, and revert, sadder and wiser than before, to a humiliating consciousness that mere removal of restraint, or lavishing of political rights, does not bring us nearer to the Millennium. In place of the system of *Laissez-faire* (resting on the idealistic sentiment of Rousseau and suchlike poetic prophets of a Golden Age), we are about to inaugurate a regimen of severest coercion.

§ 7. It is in the highest degree undesirable that statesmen, reformers, or divines should neglect the study of history; that is, the inductive method. It is dangerous to shut one's eyes to facts, to the active criticism of holy things—whether religious belief or upright conduct and patriotic virtues—by men who reserve to themselves the right of passing judgment on all things; that is, who insist on being able to justify all outward constraint, whether of creed or social order, by its usefulness or attractions for themselves. It is of little avail to blind ourselves to the supremacy of the *egoistic* motive in life. Let us take the case of Religion: Who can doubt that the strong reaction against the Christian faith one hundred years ago, and in some modified form continuing down to the present time, was due to the denial

of personality, of freedom, of responsibility, of divine justice, in a perverted and too logical Calvinism which then unhappily prevailed? This antagonism (visible very conspicuously in John Stuart Mill) is animated (like many other rebellions against a *nominal* religion) by a really moral motive; and just as the hostility of Lucretius to the popular system arose from feelings of outraged justice, instinctive purity, common sense, and a horror of cruelty, the denial of a popular religion is often the sign of a deeply religious spirit. Atheism can sometimes be a most genuine, though mistaken, reverence for the Divine.

§ 8. It is perilous to refuse to reckon with this natural impulse towards self-realization; it is foolish to reject its co-operation. This impulse is the form taken in *man* by the instinct of self-preservation in all sentient nature; and which in man is not directed to the mere perpetuation of a type, but rather to the perfection of single specimens. No system can last which does not commend itself to the individual; for the test of its abiding security is its power to please him, to satisfy his legitimate demands, to justify itself to him, and so to enthral him in a voluntary servitude, which is to him perfect freedom. Nay, if we look through history, shall we not find that, besides the supreme Christian motive of personal affection for a friend, which is out of reach of the shafts of argument or ridicule, the only other worth speaking of is "*Noblesse oblige*," the indefinable sense of duty, which is by no means an altruistic principle, but is (in the last resort) entirely selfish. It is an idle misuse of language to describe the devotion of love as wholly unselfish; its sacrifices being warranted, its decisions being in the highest degree recommended to the personal spirit as the truest consummation of Self.

§ 9. It is no matter in what department of life this indifference to the individual, this neglect of the concrete, appears: I have mentioned the arbitrary system of a depraved theology, which, after all the toilsome efforts of humanity to know, to apprehend, the nature of God, pronounces Him and His ways unknowable, not indeed to be justified to our instinctive sense of equity. This inexplicable creed, which teaches that the glory of God is the sole object of creation, and not the happiness of man, succeeds to a similar belief in the Mediæval Church—that the part must be sacrificed to the whole, and that the end justifies the means. Luther rebels in a spirit of legitimate subjectivity (though Protestantism is soon implicated with a still more severe Fatalism). In the political world, no other reason need be assigned for the democratic development of the last three hundred years, than the reasonable discontent of the single citizen at the neglect of his welfare, his exclusion from councils in which his interest was mainly concerned, his treatment as a mere instrument to serve national or dynastic purposes, in the success of which he had but a scanty share, in an age which had forgotten the ancient definition of Kingship. Assuredly it was no vague sense of political rights in abeyance (though these, being obvious, at first attracted his whole attention); nor, again, any dim love of humanity, but a personal motive in each case, disguised though it was under false theories and unreal sentiment. With a frank selfishness Christianity can deal, but is almost powerless wherever Pantheistic fervour or Cosmic emotion has enervated the mind into forgetfulness of itself.

§ 10. The revolt against despotism implies that the citizen will not consent to be sacrificed for the advancement of an abstract cause, or to act as a mere necessary wheel in a great machine. Hampden represents *indi-*

vidualism, which will not consent to become a tool. At first, it is true, these reformers believed that when an unrighteous and unaccountable government, centring in one capricious man, was removed, a *collective* will would reign harmonious, respecting and satisfying all *several* needs, the guarantee of *personal*, the safeguard of *national* freedom. But it was soon discovered that the rivalries, the competition, the asperities, of social life were rather increased than mitigated by the change, and that the single life must expect perhaps less consideration under a Republic than under a Monarchy. It is time to-day for social reformers to recognise the true origin of this revolutionary upheaval: a desire for personal freedom and a share in earthly good things, and not a vague indignation against peculiar titles or exclusive privileges. There is no sign that people are willing to merge themselves in the State, except it be for their own advantage; and any strengthening or extension of the powers of Government, be it autocratic or popular, cannot fail to be met by a Sophistic ebullition of self-will, a candid cynicism which shakes itself free from worn-out superstitions of social duty and patriotic self-surrender, and acknowledges only one aim in a life now purely secular,—the gratification of impulse, and the cajoling of the mob to suit a selfish convenience. (Eloquence may be again found an easier way to the dictatorship of the vulgar than force of arms, and a firm government of this kind founded on popular deception is perhaps the future regimen of the twentieth century.)

§ 11. Again, in the purely speculative field, Philosophy proper, or the *anthropometric* explanation of the universe, marks a phase in this rebellion, whether man believes himself to be will and spirit, or a mere bundle of sensation. The final reference is invariably to the

individual; and the extreme forms of this subjectivism on the spiritual side, regard the material universe as the *creation* of the thinking brain. "The world depends on him, and not he upon the world." So that (so far as the history of man supplies us with insight into his nature) we can see that the oppressiveness of a Whole which neglects its parts, whether in State or Church, or Philosophy,—whether in idea of God or conception of an autocratic or a socialistic community,—will result in a salutary reaction of the single and wilful life against the tyranny of an abstraction. Beyond all things let us recognise that men who have fought so strenuously against thraldom of a *personal* sovereign, always invested with a certain attractiveness and tolerated with a certain pride, are not likely to submit tamely to the bondage of *aggregate* will. Alcibiades represents the finest and most mature type of citizen which a republic begets, not the sober Nicias. The futility of the collectivist ideal, as engendering its opposite, as bearing within itself the "germ of its inevitable annihilation," must be clearly understood. At present it depends mainly for its *theoretic* support (and certainly for its *practical* execution) upon a belated and inconsistent survival of purely Christian virtues, which, so far from being built upon a basis of Socialism, arise entirely from this fruitful doctrine of the peculiar value of the individual soul.

§ 12. For here is the final instance to support our thesis,—that the single soul must be satisfied in its legitimate requirements and claims for consideration. The Gospel of Christ, historically the mightiest instrument, the most powerful factor in the development of modern Europe, depends in the last resort upon the overthrow of the fallacy of Collectivism. In it the centre of gravity is shifted from an earthly Jewish

State, theocratic and yet secular, to an immortal soul; from an ideal of external and national prosperity, to the inward peace and happiness of the believer. If the expression may be used with reverence, Christ directs attention to the transcendent value of the individual in the Hebrew world, just as Aristotle centres his logical and ethical teaching upon a loftier estimate of the Personal; the one corrects the narrow secularism of a State-conscious community, as the other had attempted to amend the sentimental Collectivism of Plato.

§ 13. To conclude, we have tried to bring the Sophistic epoch of calm inquiry and ultimate subjectivism into connection with similar manifestations in later times of this same spirit of self-will. We have endeavoured to show that this reaction against oppressive centralization is both legitimate and desirable,—that, in spite of its aberrations in anti-social eccentricity or violent anarchy, yet here alone, in the sense of personal value and responsibility, resides the ultimate spring of action, the true and final motive.

In effect, the most lofty professions of Altruism are based upon the pleasure, the exciting satisfaction, which the theory gives to its champion. But this ardour, this enthusiasm for an aggregate, or an abstraction (which can never be the subject of experience), can rarely be communicated to others. It cannot form the abiding principle of an effective movement of reform. We shall later have cause to notice the fate of Stoicism, which failed to regenerate society, because it could not satisfy the natural curiosity of the personal spirit as to its own function here and destiny hereafter. Mr. Pater puts, in his own admirable manner, the secret of the fascination of Sophist teachers, and of the influence of Socrates (who *corrected*, while he *adopted*, their method): "These young Athenians, whom he was

thought to have corrupted of set purpose, he had not only admired, but really loved and understood; and, as a consequence, had longed to do them real good, chiefly by giving them that *interest in themselves* which is the first condition of any real power over others."

Or again: "To make men *interested in themselves*, as being the very ground of all reality for them,—*la vraie verité*, as the French say,—that was the essential function of the Socratic method: to flash light into the house within,—its many chambers, its memories and associations, upon its inscribed and pictured walls. Fully occupied there, as with his own essential business in his own house, the young man would become, of course, proportionately less interested in what was superficial in the mere outsides of other people and their occupations." [1]

[1] *Plato and Platonism.*

Book One

THE HELLENIC AGE: PLATONISM AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

CHAPTER IV

CORRECTION OF A HASTY ESTIMATE OF THE SUBJECT; GROWING IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF A DIVINE PROVIDENCE

CHAPTER IV

SOCRATES; ADOPTS AND CORRECTS THE SOPHISTIC CRITERIUM, MODIFYING THE ISOLATION OF THE UNIT WITH A FIRM TRUST IN PROVIDENCE

§ 1. SOCRATES accepts the verdict of the age, that the individual is the measure of all things, but pleads for a closer scrutiny, and appeals against a hasty and superficial dogmatism, *γνῶθι σεαυτόν*: "You demand freedom for the single caprice and self-will. You centre interest on the passing moods of the human subject, pronouncing that everything exists only as he knows (or desires) it. You resolve the world into a host of attractive and repellent Atoms, guided (if such a term is applicable to the reign of chance) by a Power utterly beyond our knowledge in its nature, origin, purpose. The State (a mere law of the stronger, or compact of the weaker), you believe, lies at the mercy of the ambitious Egoist; and since it appeals solely to fear and coercion, its edicts are binding on him only so long as he cannot escape detection. Instinctive and transmitted morality, or the constitution of a State, may be altered or destroyed by the persuasive eloquence of a well-trained orator" (the Sophists proper were teachers of rhetoric) "speaking in his own interest. In a word, Might is Right; and Might rests not, as in the days of Hercules and Theseus, in the sword, but in the tongue." In the present day we are perplexed by the inconsistency, the anomalous position of those who hesi-

tate to bring into the moral and political sphere the disintegrant Atomism which they maintain in the cosmic and religious; and who are living upon the charitable alms of previous centuries, and clothing themselves in stolen garments,—I mean the inheritance of Christian modes of thought. Socrates found his sense of right, his desire for truth, thwarted by a frank Individualism in the heyday of its youthful pride and paradox, with no trace as yet of the settled gloom of later schools. What he objected to in this tone was not its frankness or its individualism, but its shallow pretensions to omniscience and finality,—its claims to have exhausted the study of itself, of the human subject, of the secrets of the heart,—whereas, in truth, it knew little or nothing about it. This prevailing Sophistic tone,—which is only *represented* and not initiated by the notable professors, who either followed or encouraged a prevailing fashion,—does but mark the overthrow of civic sanctions, and of a patriotic morality; and would prove (if history is to be believed) a natural and inevitable consequence of republican institutions. The first moment of suspicious reflexion upon the civic and the single life,—upon the intolerable demands which the *Universal* makes upon the *particular*, —is sufficient to awaken the Sophistic scepticism.

§ 2. "A man's life" (they seemed to say) "was his own, to do what he liked with; his ideas, his knowledge, his tastes, his desires, were also his own; he could recognise no other standard, no external criterium or justifiable authority. A true use of life was to enjoy these to himself, or rather" (and here is the peculiar trait of this earlier and more sanguine Individualism which does not retire from, but claims to influence society) "to attain success by making others think as he did,—by *imposing* his theories upon his fellows, putting his thoughts ready-made into other men,—not that his own views were

truer, but perhaps a little more useful than theirs." In modern times we see an awkward or grotesque civism combined with an Atomic, or at least improvidential, system of the Universe; underneath is the sorrowful despair of a cynical or a sentimental subjectivity. The last plunge into Egoism, they are ashamed to take; and the Church and all religious reformers are puzzled to know what to make of a scientific creed which naturally inculcates pure selfishness, and yet professes a sublime morality, a love of mankind, a willing self-devotion, —which reposes entirely on those old sanctions, axioms, traditions, which it proposes to abolish for ever. The dangerous rival to Christianity to-day seems to be not (as so many think) a straightforward Egoism: rather it is to be found in a peculiar and reasonless survival of Christian sentiment in minds from which Christian dogma has been rigorously banished. We may ask at first, How long will this last? and secondly, when we hear them repeat, "Christianity has served its purposes; stripped of the husk of dogma" (by which they mean assurance of immortality and the merciful providence, the kindly interest, of a *personal* God), "the fair fruit remains,—the law of duty, abandonment of self, a wide fraternal love," let us further inquire whether this system of self-loss, so alien at first sight to our nature, so antagonistic to the universal instinct of self-preservation amid the struggles of life, be not founded on certain indispensable presuppositions.

§ 3. Socrates had no such difficulty; all was clear, straightforward, outspoken; the antagonist wore no disguise, trifled with no sentimental appeals, made no attempts to conciliate respectable morality. Nor was there any outburst of evil licence, so that sober men and honest, if stupid, citizens took sudden alarm. The life of the average man in society—very much what it is now, only

more joyous—was as much above (or in advance of) this seemingly immoral creed, as modern secular society falls short of its moral and amazing pretensions to philanthropic virtue, entirely free from the taint of expected recompense.

Notwithstanding, in this pronounced *speculative* Scepticism (as we should call it), so popular among the young men of Greece, Socrates saw the dangers of a hurried and immature Dogmatism on a subject of the highest importance. The problem of *Knowledge* was implicated with the far more serious *moral* question (as has been often remarked); the two went together, and were inseparable: but we must here present it, as Socrates did, as a constructive moral search for some standard above that of a hasty and petulant subjectivity, — higher, indeed, yet embracing and satisfying the subjective impulse. For this subjectivity (here lay the danger) was not content with its own true realm, the mind of the thinker; it sought to impose itself on the world; it was tyrannical; and, while boldly avowing the nothingness, the complete *relativeness*, of its own conclusions, yet cynically attempted to make them *generally* accepted,—to enforce them as Universal Law.

§ 4. Most of the peculiar dogmas of Socrates arise in reaction against this proposed despotism of ingenious and unscrupulous intellect, which recognises nothing outside or beyond itself. To it we attribute his method of attaining a definition by ordinary conversation (I do not term it dialectic, which at once disguises in mystery the extreme simpleness of Socrates' design). The Sophistic teachers failed to recognise the equal liberty of each single life; proclaiming their own independence, they yet sought to enslave others; and for this slavery to views which (as they allowed) were subjective hallucination, they claimed large rewards! Concentrated as Socrates was upon the human individual, in the con-

crete form of the youth of Athens, and not in any misty abstraction, from this barefaced imposture he revolted. "I do not seek to make you think and feel like me; I want you to think and feel for yourselves." Knowledge, in the possibility of which[1] he firmly believed, came to men by serious and definite discussion,—not by learning off some dialectical figures to disconcert an old-fashioned opponent, or by studying the seductive tropes or cadences of a mellifluous rhetoric. Truth could be ascertained (about *practical* matters, that is to say) by calmly considering what Common Sense could teach us; that is, Reason stripped of all desire to achieve a dialectical victory, — stripped, too, of all selfish and momentary impulse. Inquiry in common was the only sure way of arriving at conclusion or definition, in which both parties could agree; and without this surely there could be no mutual understanding. Such was the aim of his conversational method; he had no wish to merely trip up an opponent. He may have irritated people by his questions, but at least he taught them the inadequacy of popular definition, and sent them back musing to the secret yet so effectual Dialogue of the Soul with *itself*.

§ 5. Socrates, like his disciple Plato, represents a union of two tendencies which are by no means so incompatible as is supposed: he was both a *Sceptic* and a *Mystic*. I shall have occasion, in speaking of Plato and his successors, to note how the obvious half-sophistic play of incredulous Dialectic is at once caught hold of by a doubting world, and the New Academy, definitely connected with Platonism, becomes synonymous with Scepticism; in a onesided fashion laying stress on the destructive, or preliminary conflict, which clears the ground of Ignorance that apes Knowledge (οἴησις):

[1] *Within certain limits* and *for all practical purposes*,—a notable reservation!

whereas a later combination of religion and philosophy will emphasize the *mystical* element of rapture, emotion, religious passivity,—which lies behind (in another sense is the natural sequence to) all the restless processes of ratiocination which mark the Dialogues of search. Meantime, confining ourselves to Socrates, we shall see clearly that he is as inquisitive as the Sophists whom he condemns, and with whom he was condemned; as impatient of current traditions, and of hasty and superficial attempts to define; as hostile to an indolent acquiescence in convention. He has, like Plato, his negative or *cathartic* duty,—to examine, detect, and expose the abortive offspring of his patient's mind. He could be fully as destructive as they. He had no mercy upon the crude or immature results of self-satisfied vanity. Yet, unlike the Sophists, a *constructive*, a *positive* process of instruction succeeded to this preliminary purgative. The connection of the individual soul with the world of concepts, —of ideas, as it was styled later,—he never attempts to explain. But he does seem to postulate a power for the conscientious student, the earnest thinker, of reaching, of having contact with what was True and Good (those two qualities as yet so inextricably implicated; for Virtue is Knowledge; to Know is to Be!). This power he thought was inherent in Soul as such; in the individual Soul: it could not be imparted; it was already there. The Sophists pretended to *introduce* into the mind of their pupils something quite new; something that, when there, would always remain alien, could not amalgamate. There they violently inscribed their own capricious and invalid sentiments. With all his matter-of-fact inquiry into practical things, his trivial or vulgar examples from everyday life,[1] there was a deep

[1] In which consists the Inductive method, the sonorous title for a simple process.

vein of mysticism in his character, and belief in a special and personal inspiration, which came to him in private. And if to him, poor, humble, and naturally sensual, why not to others as well? Were they not worthier? Might not they too expect revelations from an unseen world? Was not his duty confined to this preliminary clearance of the dust from the window of the Soul? or, in another metaphor, this rejection of the ill-formed, dwarfed, or distorted offspring which the young, parturient with the birth-pangs of philosophic thought, brought to him to rear and nurse?

§ 6. Socrates is not to be dismissed in a phrase: when we call him the inventor of the Inductive method, of ἐπαγωγή, we have said little or nothing. We have done no justice to that emotional, instinctive, affectionate, and religious side of his nature, which was the secret of his influence on his own generation and on the mind of Plato. Nor can we term him a mere empiric, a practical utilitarian, giving rough and ready guidance for young men in the paths of ordinary life. We are neglecting certain peculiar features which mark him off from the rest of Greek sages: first, he is extremely modest, and claims to know this only, that he is a poor, ignorant creature; secondly, he has received a divine mission (which has indeed much perplexed him) from the "central religious authority of Greece," which he cannot neglect,—in the face of danger and the interdiction of his teaching, he chooses to obey God rather than man; thirdly, this Divine Being, who has communicated His will by the Delphic oracle, has also given certain tokens of His solicitude for Socrates' welfare in the δαιμόνιον, or mysterious sign of warning (on which later philosophers in the Imperial age, eager for a *personal* connection with the divine, so readily fastened). Here is a religious sanction, indeed, an entire religious background for his

whole life and conversation. Human wisdom, he is sure (here he touches the Stoic position), is to know nothing. He does not, therefore, despair, but rather patiently awaits illumination. His *interest* in others is a novel trait in a philosopher. The affectionate nature (which remains after the evil natural tendencies have been burnt out) is satisfied only in doing his best for those who will converse with him,—in opening their eyes, (not perhaps to see the truth,) but at least to escape error, and become aware (a great point this!) of a certain lack, insufficiency in their own nature, gifted though it might be, which was humiliating when contrasted with the brilliant promises of the Sophists for their pupils. In all this there is the germ of later Mysticism,—of that spirit which does what it can in removing hindrance or obstacle to the divine light, but which, in deep consciousness of infirmity, does not claim to bring forth knowledge or righteousness itself, but desires only to await, in pure and passive expectancy, a celestial gift. All excellence, then,—all success, all knowledge,—is a gift: we are responsible for its exercise and development, not for its presence; and each peculiar faculty comes to each one of us from a good and beneficent Creator, who is in a special sense near us, as our Father.

§ 7. For the marvellous significance of the Socratic figure, his influence on all later Thought,—pregnant as he is with all the embryonic ideas, to come to birth later on in Mystic or Subjective schools,—arises not from his scientific method, but, shall we say, in spite of it? So far as he uses Reason, his results are negative; the process of discussion removes prejudice, illusion, ignorance. We must clear away the wind-eggs, the abortions (*ἀμβλωθρίδια κ. ὑπηνέμια*), all the vapours and phantoms that oppress the Soul's eye; but Truth itself, how is it reached? Does it not dawn suddenly, arising

quite unexpected in the middle of our debate, apart from our logical definition? Is not our definition nearly always *negative*? (clearing away, like the later creeds of Christian dogmatics, erroneous views, embodying the result of a long and patient *cathartic* process). But for positive Truth there is no process: our knowledge of it is *immediate* or *instinctive*. We feel it rather than prove it. The Highest Truths for Socrates, connected always (as they must be for earnest thinkers) with the *personal* spirit in man, its dignity and destiny, are certainly not results of frigid inquiry or impartial ratiocination. Take this "Scientific" method, you reach arid generalizations, which guard from conventional and superficial errors indeed, but do not explain; for *explanation* of such things is a justification to the individual consciousness. It is not difficult to understand how Socrates appears, to the conservative of his own age, as a destructive Sophist, an irritating and ingenious dialectician; and how Plato left behind him only a school of Sceptics, to whom the supreme task of Reason was a searching inquiry into herself; pronouncing her own dethronement, and thus returning penitently enough to the old standard and guidance of conventional society.

§ 8. But here is not the real influence of Socrates, the Father of practical Philosophy. If, with Dr. Stirling, the true object of such inquiry is the establishment of three dogmas,—God, freedom, immortality (round which all human interest will be found to centre, if we only penetrate deep enough into the secret springs and motives of speculation),—we are convinced to-day (as Socrates then) that we cannot reach certainty or comfortable assurance by any exercise of the (*impersonal*) Reasoning faculties. Socrates shows us another way. His debating method contrives to lay bare in its own pure nature, with its inherent love of truth and good-

ness, the human soul, in its original and undefiled state, cleared of accretions, divine in its origin, immortal in its destiny, attended by the solicitude and care of celestial agencies, warned in moments of peril, and soothed in the last extremities of death by a hope which is independent of, which is superior to, all mere *rational* arguments. This direct faculty, impatient of tardy processes (shall we call it instinct?), is the voice of the truest and inmost soul, speaking with authority, in immediate contact with eternal verities: it cannot be silenced. Socrates appeals from a secular mundane consciousness, from a spurious subjectivity, to universal human nature; *universal*, indeed, yet *personal* (for he is the first *personal* philosopher). He strives, as the chief task of education,[1] to make his pupil interested in himself. He appeals to the underlying sense, in each man, of duty, of a love for beauty and goodness, which, once fully realized (too sanguine optimist!), cannot but take effect in action.

§ 9. He tries to unfold to his hearer the wonders of the world within; not, be it observed, *Socrates'* own private world within,—*his* ingenity, learning, cleverness, —but that of his pupil. The first serious subjective philosopher, he sounds a recall from the transitory and the phenomenal, to the eternal and unchanging; he is the leader of all who afterwards centre attention on the human personality, whether or not they reconcile this person to his struggles in an alien universe. He is, too, as we have hinted, the leader of *Mystics*; for he overcomes his doubts, supports his hopes in the goodness of Providence, the eternity of the Soul, not by arguments, though he allows these "to pass this way or that around his dying bed";—his final test of the Highest Truth is not dialectic: it is unassailable con-

[1] *Plato and Platonism*, 79; see above.

viction, so soon to appear as the final criterium in Stoicism. He will not be put off by the eccentricities, idiosyncrasies of this man or that, set up in definition as true human nature: he will reach the true man; he touches the common ground of all rational nature, and makes this nature to consist, not in following a momentary caprice, or pleasure, or opinion (false subjectivity), but in a kind of long-sighted and trustful prudence, which does not seize greedily at the several occasions of gratification as they fleet by, but aims rather at a life-long happiness, extending (such was his earnest hope and conviction) beyond the limits of existence here into another age. He felt sure that if anyone could once be brought to consider his own nature,—not as passion or vanity or ambition instructed; not as the State, but as a deep self-knowledge taught him,—he would never recur to those perilous errors of convention, but would live steadfastly, a law to himself, happy (because self-respecting and trustful) in this world and the next. These principles never came from pure Reason; but rather from an instinct of sonship, a religious instinct, suggesting to the Soul as probable far more than it can prove by argument.

§ 10. Socrates, with his tender interest in others, his emotional nature, mystic trances, strange superstitions, pious beliefs, is yet known in the history of thought as being the discoverer of the Generalization, of the Inductive method, of Universal Concepts, which are in due time to be hypostatized into Platonic Ideas. But in whatever formula this account of Socrates be expressed, it tells us nothing about the man. His attitude to Reasoning, to what is called the Scientific and accurate method, is this: it is a good purgative, but for its true sustenance the Soul must be left to itself, to the

natural, *inherent*, *immediate* perception of Truth, which is Universal reason, the ground of all human or all rational being, which speaks to us of three great probabilities,—μετ' εἰκοτός τινος κ. εὐπρεπείας, God, freedom, and immortal life,—which for Socrates, the adult conscience, as for Hegel, after these many centuries, remain the supreme objects of philosophic inquiry. "You are looking at human nature, rather than the world outside; that is a right preference. But you do not yet know what you are seeking. You must penetrate deeper. I will show you human nature as it really is; at least I can remove the disguises of alien opinion, of dogmatic certitude, which it assumes, and show you its infirmity and dependence."

§ 11. We cannot overlook this *religious* element in Socrates. This (as Mr. Pater supposes) had an even deeper influence on Plato, than the philosophical, and therefore *sceptical*, inquiries of the master. Socrates is actually the first to combine with inquiry, emotion enthusiasm love unproven hope in immortality; to introduce into Science an unfeigned trustfulness in Providence, a sense of a personal and immediate relation to the Divine, represented now as comprising the host of deities which his country worshipped, now by the "central religious authority" of Greece, now by an All-father, a single Creator of great benevolence, wisdom, and (above all) *personal* interest in him. This conviction, coupled with a consequent sense of human importance and individual value (utterly at variance with the earlier physical or Atomic views, of the nonentity of men), is his starting-point in his rôle of instructor of youth. He believes everyone has it, like himself; he seeks to awaken and stimulate a dormant faculty for seeing things, useful and ordinary things, in a broad light, for comprehending existence here as a whole, for recognising the essential feebleness

of reason or reasoning to supply answers to the main questions for finding the Divine Principle or inner communion with oneself.

The strong point of Socrates is his resistance to impersonality. It is in Aristotle that he is interested, —the dangerous personal opinions put within human person —and in human nature in the abstract. His philosophy he is the first professor of wisdom who takes trouble with others and takes the trouble for nothing is like all true philanthropy, universal not personal. Even the truth he pursues with an ardent love which seems out of place unless a person be the object and more all,—and here is the human mark of progress on the "eternal moment" of Parmenides or the wild intelligence of Anaxagoras,—the God is a Father Who has made the world for man and "Who takes note of him."

§ 11. *Socratic virtues.* Inquiring subject and object of inquiry are united and reconciled. How? Be Reason!—not perhaps in the last resort, but by Faith, based in reason on what has been called "an indefinite natural progression to immortality, personal survival or resurrection round which arguments whether we say they 'hold' some and go 'backwards'." Before a man can know the *why*, its *purpose*,[1] he must know what he is, what is the essential behaviour, structure of the mental universal, those tempers and tendencies and virtues of the Socratic youth which are not the true man, but rather inspiring sentiments seen to be worn out and cast aside.

Socrates recognises at once that the pure Reason cannot tell him of true life. He chooses a purpose not behind, beyond, not unattainable. A scientific philo-

[1] Plato.

[2] Compare Aristotle's saying that Virtue is not an end, only as a means to Happiness.

tion of a *practical* thing only removes error; it does not teach Truth. At the bottom of each man's soul, he believed, lay a knowledge, or an instinct, which gave him right intuitions, preserved him from falling,—"like one's guardian angel holding one back." His debates threw men into confusion (*ἀπορία*), and he never pretended that *he* could give the answer; he could only test the product of mental parturience with a midwife's art, with a *serious* Sophistic criticism. If Truth, or a large view of the thing, in itself flashed in this dim process across the pathway, no merit was his; it was a divine revelation. All the best things that man has to boast of come to him while sleeping (as honours to the patricians of Rome). Man is but an instrument in the hand of God (he had this sort of pious and cheerful fatalism): he could not desert a divine mission, because men desired him to abandon this tiresome confutation of himself and others; nay, man was the slave of God, and had no right to desert his post until the signal was given, and the General sounded a retreat. Yet behind this blind self-devotion there lies (a mere instinct after all!) the belief that God "took *note* of him," like a wise *personal* friend, and knew what was best.

§ 13. This, then, is the strong point of Socrates: reconciliation of rebellious subject and object, by Faith. What in other men may be strong moral effort to believe the world *reasonable*, and the Creator careful for each one of us, was to him an "immovable personal assurance." He was born a believer, and Faith came easily to him. All through his speculation in the school of Anaxagoras, he was confident (why he could not exactly explain) that the Creator was somewhat more than intelligence, that He stood to *man* (as contrasted with, as superior to, the World of physical being) in an altogether unique and paternal relation.

But the weak point in this conception of the Creator, in this intuitive ethical system, is a hasty optimism. He sees nothing in Nature but traces of design,—minute, benevolent; he sees nothing in man but a good-will, overlaid by prejudice, warped by convention, but needing only to be *reminded* of itself. To *know* the right was to *do* it; Virtue was Knowledge; not cold ratiocinative analytic Knowledge, but insight, intuition. He neither saw the defects and cruelties of the natural world, nor estimated the strength of human passion to stifle for a time this sense of right and beauty. Yet although not borne out by experience, this appeal is the true one, to a man's sense of his own dignity, to our own trust in him,—in a word, to his honour. Socrates made no secret of being utilitarian (that is, the Good absolute *was* the good-to-us, and we were consulting our own highest and eternal interest by *learning* and (it followed of course) *doing* the good.

§ 14. The Sophists, conscious of their own powers, and seeing that the universe took no account of their needs,—that the State, as then constituted in the interests of the many weaker, presented a stubborn barrier to their ambition,—decided to look to their own advantage, and, if possible, interpret, in terms of it, things *natural* and *social*. Their *Individualism* is the perfectly natural and commendable result of the doctrine that the world was not made for man (but for some unknowable purpose), nor the State for the good of its individual citizens (but for its own glory, coherence, perpetuity). If man is told he is a mere instrument, unconsciously assisting towards an end which he cannot understand, he will turn back indignantly upon himself and his varying moods. The delusion (as it may be) of freedom is too strong within to allow us tamely to endure slavery to an *unknown* master! No reflection—judicious, impassive—can ever

satisfy us with regard to the nature and meaning of the world, the character of the Supreme Being, and our relation to Him. By the exercise of pure Reason, as Aristotle saw, we may arrive at a Supreme Intelligence, but cannot reach a Supreme Goodness: no computations, no dialectical proof, can assure us of virtue, of benevolence. We feel them, as if by intuition; we admire instinctively; and our blushes at a spontaneous and half-involuntary act of charity show how such naturally shrinks back from the criticism of Reason. Nothing is easier than to overthrow, from a theoretical point of view, the still current virtues of domestic or social life. After all, they are mere compacts, looked at apart from the secret and personal life of the single Soul.

§ 15. Now Socrates was assured of this (as we might say, with our Christian prejudices) "selfish and immoral" consequence of Sophistic and Atomic systems, nay, even of the Anaxagorean theology. Here were men in whose adult Greek consciousness arose an invincible sense of importance of power, of dignity, and yet their soul was a mere temporary combination of atoms, the result of a certain disposition of first elements, or (if the now almost obsolete Ionian dogmatism of Diogenes be consulted) the primal element in a certain phase. Nay, even if the help and consolation of Dionysiac or Orphic myth were called in to encourage the neglected personality,—as the Pythagoreans seem to have done,—yet few could be finally content with the dogma of metempsychosis. Man, now mature, desired above all things to be *himself*; and wished to know how, in regard to him, the Universe and its Maker stood. Now, no examination of phenomena will give this knowledge: our first interpretation of things is to a certain degree a matter of temperament, but our final verdict implies a *moral* effort,—an exercise of mental freedom, uncon-

strained by the messages of the visible world,—which, like arguments for and against immortality, "pass and repass around us harmlessly." Concentration on the world around with outward gaze produces scepticism, and a sense of nothingness, which drives a man back to seize the victories and pleasures of the moment, in a destiny which is altogether obscure. But Socrates proposes to estimate the Universal Nature only after a thorough scrutiny of *his own*: with him philosophy becomes, for the first time, *ethical* and *anthropocentric*. He finds in himself a certainty (which he believes all others, if only cleared of prejudice and conventional errors, must share),—a certainty of the dignity and happiness of the moral life,—not estimated (as Aristotle seems to judge it, in this matter too a reactionary) by its effect on others, by success in mundane matters; but by an inward approbation of God, to Whom the single life is of supreme value, Who warns, protects, and ensures happiness, here and hereafter. But before arriving at these consoling conclusions,—which thus effectively reconcile the *particular* with the scheme of *Universal* Providence,—he has to pass through the dark shadow of Doubt, and out of the lowland of Ignorance, until at last, so far from regretting this experience of despair, he founds upon it his *positive* system of religion and ethics. Socrates is only constructive because he has destroyed; for the final sanctions of conduct, for the guarantees of Divine care and love, he appeals not to Knowledge but to Instinct,—to an "unfailing assurance," which he believes will arise in a mind that sets itself to do right.

§ 16. It may be that these doctrines, which certainly mark the constructive division of Socrates and Plato, are not fully explicit in the earlier teacher. But I am at pains to seize the really fundamental thought lying

beneath the eager curiosity, the serious or playful discussion of these centuries. And I cannot help thinking that the singleness of the Socratic aim,—the earnestness of his work of practical reform, his confessorial interest (so unphilosophic) in the lives of his pupils,—has been obscured by the apparent *formality* of Aristotle's commendation. His contribution to the building of Wisdom's Temple—is what? Surely not in inventing a *method*, so that he stands classed alongside of Zeno,—the one as discoverer of Dialectic, the other of the Inductive process and of Definition? Useful and true summary, indeed, from one point of view, but, as I think, misleading when applied to the motive, the inner impulse, of that noble life. We must not be deceived by the statement, "Virtue is knowledge": (he does not mean Reasoning Knowledge,) this sort is *immediate*, and comes not to men except by instinct,—by reaching the *common ground* (κοινὸς λόγος) of all Rational Soul, which is Divine, which is a law to itself, which does right because it cannot help it. To find a fundamental thought, look at each school in its *practical* bearing. Socrates repairs the shattered fabric of morals (and in so doing, the edifice of theoretical Knowledge as well), because he believes, with Kant, it is only the pure in heart that can see truth,—moral truth, not speculative,—and because he trusts in God.

Book One

THE HELLENIC AGE: PLATONISM AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

CHAPTER V

PLATO; THE SUPREMACY OF THE *FINAL* IN PLACE OF THE *EFFICIENT* CAUSE

CHAPTER V

PLATO

§ 1. Much that has been said about Socrates must be taken as referring to the Platonic portraiture. Yet the views therein explicit are only the legitimate deductions of the master's fundamental thought. A Final Cause for the Universe; *why?* not *whence?* or *what?* or *how?* In this purposive working lay the secret of the Energy which was at the root of all being. He did not care for Anaxagoras' explanation; he was much disappointed with the frigid introduction of a *Deus ex machina.* Such an answer failed to satisfy his questionings, which were by no means speculative, but entirely practical, utilitarian. Plato did not care to know either what was the primal element, or how processes of alternate condensation and rarefaction produced the universe as we see it, or how man's soul was a chance medley of primordial substances, soon to be dissolved again. He thought he could see his way to a firmer ground; not so much the ground occupied by Reason (useful as she was to dispel illusion, and convince a pupil conclusively that he knew nothing), as that of pious instinct, which he believed was found in all men.[1] Similarly, *Knowledge,* in Socrates or Plato,

[1] We find the same somewhat puzzling use in the Christian Alexandrine phrases of γνῶσις and πίστις; in spite of our familiar connotation of these terms, it is γνῶσις that implies the warm, emotional, loving confidence in God that nowadays we are inclined to call *Faith.*

does not imply so much a result of Dialectic, as the immediate intuition of the truth, which flashes forth as soon as the sceptical work of Dialectic is completed, and has shown man that this way lies only the confession of ignorance; then the reward, as it were, of such confession at once follows,—Illumination. So the word πίστις in Plato is used not of this high trust, but for a low form of reliance upon the general orderliness and accountability of natural phenomena.

What was it all for? Socrates boldly, and first of all men, answered: for *our* use and perfection. We are the servants, and also the friends of the gods, whose providence places us here for some good end, perhaps not at present clearly intelligible; but certainly, amongst other possible purposes, for our future and eternal happiness. Now this doctrine it is quite impossible to *prove* in any sense of the word, except by an appeal to personal conviction and inward experience. For here we leave the physical question of efficient causes, or invariable sequences, discoverable by Reason, and impose of our own free will a *moral* interpretation on the Universe beyond the evidence before us, more than the facts in themselves warrant—a Final Cause is what Socrates and Plato sought; and they find it not in a Prime Mover, but in the Idea of the good.

§ 2. The *Reality* of Things—so Plato taught—lies in their *Purpose*. Herein lies the true significance of his Ideal Theory, cleared of its formal and logical accretions. To repeat, he does not ask the endless question, of what is the world made? Whence does it arise? Who is it that moves? He is even disappointed with the answer of Anaxagoras, that Thought ordered and governed it. "Without some addition, this attempted solution was worse than meaningless. Thought! Whose thought? and, again, Thought of what? He replied, "It is God's

thought, and it is His thought of Good." What man has to study is not the mechanical succession of Nature's laws, the real constitution of matter, the ultimate destiny of our physical frame. This he gave up as a hopeless quest; or engaged in as a sportive relaxation (an *ἀμεταμέλητος ἡδονή*); or transformed and illustrated with the brilliance of his theory of the Final Cause. The real inquiry of man was to enter into the *moral* purpose of the Creator, not into the *intellectual* workings of that mighty intelligence. The *essence* of things: to find this, discover their *purpose*. Now, starting from our own common human nature, and from his own peculiar self-knowledge,—discovering how little certainty could be attained by current methods of knowing, reasoning, debate (save, perhaps, an equilibrium of judgment),[1]—Plato believed that the *purpose* of the Creator in making man in His own image, was that he might lead the life of justice, truth, and goodness. The true life of the Soul, blessed here and hereafter, is to follow its *οἰκεῖον ἔργον*, the true *δικαιοπραγία*, *πράττειν τὰ ἑαυτοῦ*: to discover, first, what is the *Idea* of Man—with what design God surrounded him, a personal and immortal spirit, with a visible body, planted him in a visible universe, and made him a member of a visible corporation, the State. Next, for each one to find out what he can do best[2]—his own peculiar *ἔργον*, which he alone could do well, or at least better than anybody else. We are parts of God—reflections, if we clear our souls of mud, of the Divine Intelligence; nay more, each is a Divine Thought; each the embodiment of a Divine Idea; each is gifted with a singular and separate mission. God is near—within us, indeed;

[1] Afterwards pronounced by later schools to be the highest good, because it gave the Inward Peace.

[2] Cf. Plutarch, De Tranq. An. § 13.

all true "Knowledge" is intuition, an immediate illumination.

§ 3. The central thought of Plato's teaching is *realization* of a Divine purpose. God who creates the universe, because He is good and begrudging of no benefit, is the pattern on which the wise man is to model his own life of active, unselfish, missionary enterprise. The wise man is to enter social life as a reformer; not because (as some would have us think to-day) the only reality left is the abstract aggregate life, —the individual being but a passing bubble on the surface of the stream,—but just because his own life of meditation on ideas (on the Divine Counsels, purposes, in things) and his own sense of personal value and immortality impresses upon him this duty as a means to his own highest development, and therefore displays it as the sole path to happiness. Afterwards comes the decay of theology, and the retirement of the sage from a world where either no Providence rules, or one whose ends are inscrutable—are indeed unjustifiable before the individual's judgment of right. The optimism of the Platonic School—its strength and its weakness—depends upon this substitution of a *Final* for an *Efficient* Cause; the secret of the contentment of all Mystics, who, in their veritable world of inward experience, identify themselves, in perfect trust, with the Divine Will. This is knowledge; they really understand, and are satisfied with, the purpose of Creation,—the design of God in the world and themselves. Religious philosophy does not inquire into the *process* of development, but into its *object*. We cannot be left in an aimless world;[1]

[1] "It is not that they *wish* to do *this*, but that they *must*; self-deception is the alternative. There is no pleasure in the consciousness of being an infinitesimal bubble on a globe that is itself infinitesimal compared with the totality of things. Those on whom the unpitying rush

if it can be proved that there is no design in Nature, in the faculties and nobility of man, there is nothing to keep us from despair. We may find a palliative in earthly success, or in a robust physical health; but a chain is not stronger than its weakest link. And it will be well to recognise the great teaching of modern critical thought, that this examination into *natural* things is powerless to give anything but the steps of the process; we must consult our own *moral* sense, our instinct, to discover its meaning. And after all, this assurance, so vivid and comforting personally, must seem weak when we attempt to communicate it to others. We are almost ashamed of the empty logical formality of our arguments to support the being of God, our own freedom, and its inseparable corollary, immortal life. After all, ratiocination or minute scrutiny of detail will advance us little in the great quest for Motive, for Sanction, or for Purpose. We must add this idea freely to our interpretation of the Universe; this postulate,[1] that God is Good, and that He has made us to enjoy Him for ever.

§ 4. Why do we call Plato an Idealist? The Realism or cold intellectualism of Ionian and Eleatic Schools is confronted and transformed by the naïve confidence of Socrates, after physical speculations had been united with theology by Anaxagoras. Socrates is, to his pupils

of changes inflicts sufferings which are often without remedy, find *no consolation in the thought that they are at the mercy of blind forces,*— which cause, indifferently, now the destruction of a sun and now the death of an animalcule. Contemplation of a universe which is without conceivable beginning or end, and *without intelligible purpose*, yields no satisfaction. The Desire to know what it all means is not less strong in the Agnostic than in others, and raises sympathy with them. *Failing utterly to find any interpretation himself*, he feels a regretful inability to accept the interpretation they offer." (Herbert Spencer in the *Fortnightly Review*, June 1895.)

[1] It can be nothing more, *μετ' εἰκότος τινὸς κ. εὐπρεπείας ἢ ταῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτ' ἄττα*, a probable myth, like all Plato's constructive parts.

and to his time, a striking personality; and the centre of gravity changes, from supposed objective realities, to Man, over whom presided the good providence of the gods. The significant "moment" is the alliance, the henceforth inseparable alliance, between ethics and theology. Plato transfers this *moral* motive—or *moral* explanation of man, as δοῦλος θεῶν, directly and divinely inspired—into the sphere of the Macrocosm. The simple-minded teleology of Socrates, reminding his hearers that the world was built by God for man, gives place to a far-reaching system of unification, by which the discovery of the *motive* in things explains, not merely man's duty and behaviour here, but also the orderly existence of the Universe.

§ 5. Idealism is a certain invasion by the Moral Sense or the Practical Reason (with its irresistible corollaries) into the Province of pure Empiricism and Experiment. Idealism means that you insist on piercing to the *motive*, *design*, *use* of a thing; and pronounce it *existing* only so far as it executes or completes this—fulfils its mission, as we say. The Idealist is not content with the Realism, —the mere scientific curiosity, animated by no further desire,—which, banishing Final (and even Efficient) Causes as beyond our ken, beyond the discovery of positive science, says, "There it is." "It is, because it *is*," not because it *ought* to be; and if this dogmatic assertion be met by the pertinent query, "How does this existence arise?" a fresh mystery is put forward as the explanation, a postulate of inherent spontaneity, or physical necessity, or (most absurd of hypostatized phantoms!) the "*laws* of a deified nature."

Beyond this unsatisfactory position Idealism presses; it must know *why?* The permanence of type amid the shifting masses of matter, amid the decay of individual representatives, points to something consistent, unchange-

able, and eternal behind; which, and which alone, can be in a proper sense the object of our cognition; for the search for an object of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), and not opinion (δόξα), is with Plato a *moral* quest.

§ 6. But what are these Ideas? Are they causes? Are they generalizations? Are they mere definitions? Hypostatized abstractions of our own mind, projected on vacancy as real existences? Plato, arriving at them first from mere prosaic thinking on Socrates' universals, concepts, definitions, detects in them a mysterious character of vigour and influence, sees them as the mediaries between the stony rigidity of Elea and the "flamboyant" systems of Ionia:—finds there the answer to the great question, How did the One become the Many? The One first passed into the transition-stage of One-Many, in which not only does the One contain within itself, though *one, manifold* differences and potentialities of movement; but each of these ideas contains in itself implicitly the possibility of myriad sensible manifestations, of which it is the creator and parent. To this region of εἴδη, the human mind has immediate access—it can generalize; and logic, pushing forward theology,—a theory of *knowledge* necessarily bringing on[1] a theory of *Causation*,—it can invest these abstractions (as we must regretfully call them) with a deliberate *desire* to realize, to plant themselves out in space and time, with a genuine and inherent power of creation and spontaneous energy.

But this is a bald and dialectical way of expressing the Ideal theory. What did Plato mean by it? Was it a mere logical process, a generalization, a convenience of talking, decorated with plentiful poetical imagery?

§ 7. No; there is a great principle underlying it: the Ideal theory is not a mere convenience of ratiocination, by which we arrive at a common notion underlying

[1] For the order *within* was a guarantee of order *without*.

apparent diversities, by which we economize and reduce to order the disintegrating atoms of Nature,—not a mere collection of general notions about the truly essential nature of moral acts,—it is a *Theology*, an advance not only on a cold postulation of Efficient Cause in Anaxagoras, but also on the naïve and incongruous Socratic belief, which wavers doubtingly between Theism and Polytheism, between philosophic love of unity and deference to the popular pleonasm.

The Ideas, at first mere subjective notions, become divinely implanted truths, and then again are objectified as Vital Powers in nature—are all subsumed under a single Fount and Authority, the Idea of the Good. The One became the Many for a Purpose, and that a beneficent one. In those few words in *Timæus*, ὡς μάλιστα ὅμοια Ἑαυτῷ,—implying God's benevolent communication of Himself to free beings,—lies, I believe, the basal thought of Plato; final purpose, ethical motive, by which he transformed the frigid search for causation into a moral and enthusiastic cult of goodness.

§ 8. It is typical of Realists to banish Final Causes, and prohibit all inquiries which bear on the origin and destiny of the world—"the study of the *That*, and not fruitless discussion of the *When* or the *Why*, is legitimate science." Now, the peculiar strangeness of Aristotle's doctrines will be seen to be this: in spite of continual and emphatic repetition of the *Best*, as final goal of Nature's striving, there is no kind of conceivable motor in his scheme. It is unconscious, unintelligent Nature that is striving, not man; he has descended from the standpoint of Socrates and Plato, in which man is the centre of the Universe, the "measure of things." It is a blind force, which strives after an unapproachable perfection, the "idly confronting" region beyond heaven, where, in immovable and serene indifference, exist for

ever the immortal beings, *τἀκεῖ, τὰ θεῖα*. But what is the end or purpose of this development? To produce Man. But why? we further ask. Grant that Man is evolved into sentient and self-conscious life—what is his destiny? There is no sufficient answer,—because this postulate of goodness, as the spring of all Nature's striving, has no special ethical connotation, and (in spite of Aristotle's professed interest in the singular rather than the abstract whole), no reference to the individual or the personal.

§ 9. So much, in episode, to contrast the two leaders: —we must now return to certain important points: (1) Plato's progress in the doctrine of Ideas, from mere generalization to hypostatized entities, and then these again subsumed as under *ἰδέα τἀγαθοῦ*, and, lastly and significantly, under the Personal Creator of the *Timæus*, as His thoughts. (2) The activity and influence of Ideas on the visible world (where Plato's teaching is confessedly imperfect). (3) Pure *impersonal* idealism: was it countenanced by Plato?

The unification and harmony of things, under *general* terms, by which, as I have elsewhere said, man repeats the process of Creation and enters into the main thoughts of demiurgic intelligence—as Plato continued this mental process, there awoke in him a conviction of the objective validity of these sovereign notions; they were not mere *forms of human thought*, they were *creative influences*. To a mind like Plato's, utterly incapable of concentration upon the processes of pure reason, always reverting with pleasure to poetic imagery, sensible metaphor, the brilliance of visible colouring, mystical aspiration, pietistic yearning—it was impossible that these Ideas (in which Socrates had taught him to put such confidence, as the only true objects of cognition) should continue to dwell apart in a cold rarefied air as phantoms of the abstracting mind. They live, and move, and have their being:

they are the *secrets* of existing things; the *impulses* (hidden only to the shortsighted, the mentally blind) of beauty, diversity, order in the visible universe; and above all, separate and distinguishable as they appear, all are incorporated into a graduated hierarchy, each in its fitting place, under a single ruler; have but one *raison d'être*:—they all exist and actualize this nether sphere of change because of their *goodness*. The Final Purpose of the world is not an *intellectual*, but a *moral* purpose.

§ 10. But in this advance, this development of thought, we are confronted by a difficulty, which Plato does little to solve; there is an ambiguity, a cloudiness, a mist hanging about this Idealistic hypothesis, which, though dissipated in the *Timæus* by the sun of a *Moral* Creator, yet enwraps and obscures all Platonic thought in later time;—the strict nature of this Ideal world? is it a *place* or a *mind*? The Greeks, be it noted, never[1] attained to the modern doctrine which makes the Idea, the perfect, last in time,—the *result*, not the *cause*, of development,—it is always at the *origin* of things,[2] whether conceived of as strictly personal or not. Plato (as opposed, for example, to M. Vacherot) had no doubt whatever that the Ideas lived and moved and thought somewhere; and Aristotle had singularly concrete and materialistic views about the exact locality of this favoured region. They were not certainly, to Plato, mere subjective hallucinations, or conveniences for classifying—they were Divine. The great problem, which Plato scarcely settled, now remains: are they self-existent, all embraced and held together in τὸ θεῖον, by that of which each partakes, by which each lives—the Good? Or are they, plainly and bluntly, the thoughts of God?

[1] Except, perhaps, Xenocrates, Speusippus, and the Pythagoreans, as Aristotle tells us in the *Metaphysics*.

[2] Caro, *L'idée de Dieu*.

Stallbaum cannot understand them in any other way; and I must confess to a similar inability to conceive of "axioms which undulate," "theorems which march." Severed from a single unifying personal Will, the exterior or objective notion of Idea vanishes in an abyss of sheer inconceivability. The Æons of Valentine have been rightly described as "The Platonic Ideas seen through the fog of an Egyptian brain,"[1] yet the tendency to personify is found in Plato; they almost seem first, as One-Many, to form together the pattern preconceived in the Creator's mind, Philo's *κόσμος παραδειγματικὸς*, and then each idea severally issues forth as a ministering angel, a natural deity, a dæmon with restricted province, to execute upon a lower sphere the benevolent will of God.

§ 11. But this convenient hypothesis (so grateful to common sense and to our ineradicable love of personality) has certain obstacles. The Myth or Allegory of the *Timæus* (containing so much insight and sober earnest) is yet difficult to harmonize with other announcements. What is God's relation to the *ἰδέα τἀγαθοῦ*? If we may judge from immediate Academic development, the reports of Plato's lectures, and from Aristotle's peculiar views on *τὰ θεῖα*,[2] it appears probable that the Ideas are beyond Essence, inasmuch as *Goodness* is the motive and impulse that brings the real to *birth*, *ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας*—and apparently, if we follow later accounts of Platonic cosmogony, *beyond* and *above* the Demiurge, who forms the universe out of a dumb and intractable matter after this likeness—his *pattern* for the world-architecture being thus superior to himself.

[1] Dr. Bigg, *Christian Platonists*.

[2] Nothing more nor less than Plato's Ideas, the *νοητὸς τόπος*, transformed from efficient, interested, intelligent agents into impassible, transcendental, immutable essences—from *αἴτια* into *ἐρώμενα*.

Is the Gnostic hypothesis of a lower and subordinate creator fashioning the world after brilliant glimpses of the splendour of a super-celestial region, the real intention of Plato? (It is certainly a suggestive surmise, but on such a subject we cannot be dogmatic; the *personalist* will unhesitatingly choose, what is ridiculed by the other party as the mythic, fabulous, and animistic hypothesis. And yet to plain people it is impossible to dissociate the idea of *purpose* from a free and personal Will.)

§ 12. The entire ground-plan of Gnostic cosmogony may be said to depend on this Platonic Trinity,—the Ideas, God, Matter; for the denizens of the transcendental region live apart in perfection and blessedness; while a lower or inferior Æon (in whom the necessitarian operation of *decline* and degeneration has done its work) transfers these Ideas by a fatal error into Actuality. Here is exactly the allegory of Hartmann as portrayed by Uberweg: "The Will approaches the Idea with 'a Satyr's sensuous fancy'; and she, unable to avoid the lover's embrace, brings forth the child that ought not to exist";—the lower world, or the regrettable Actualization of the Ideal pattern of things. Vacherot does not go so far on the road of pessimism as these earlier or later Gnostics; but he denies all *perfection* to the *Real*, all *reality* to the *Perfect*. "God, the Idea of the world; the world, the realization of God." The one exists: the other is above existence; nay indeed, is brought down into the successive and contemporary series of actual life, only to be corrupted.

§ 13. Thus the question which arises when we remember such later developments, is, Do the Ideas *pre-exist* God? Are they *superior* to Him? When He gazes at the celestial pattern of things, by which, in boundless

compassion to the struggling earth-spirit,[1] He hopes to reproduce a semblance here below,—not by eternity of *individual* existence, but by eternal permanence of *type*, —when He thus gazes, is the Model above Him, and is He merely the *Deus ex machinâ*, the δημιουργὸς, the postulated *Will* of the Schopenhaurian, to unite these "idly confronting" hemispheres? In a word, are the Ideas the *Thoughts* of God, or objective Essences outside and independent of His mind?

§ 14. For it is quite obvious that what we lack (so far as cosmogony in concerned) in Plato's ideal theory, is any intelligible principle of causation, any starting-point of movement at all! Viewed from this side, the Ideas are purposeless: they explain nothing; "entia multiplicantur præter necessitatem." How do they come down from the serene region of untroubled Thought to interfere in our visible world? Are they *will*, as well as motion and intelligence?[2] But, as in the *Theætetus* here is the very word at issue included in the definition! Here is motion *verbally* conceded, not as a principle inherent in material objects (which to Aristotle and to modern thinkers seems the simplest hypothesis), but as already present in other entities separated from this world altogether, their influence on it altogether inexplicable. Yet what is the quest of Plato (putting aside its *cognitive* and *ethical* side for one of pure speculation on Origin) except a search for the Ultimate Cause, the Principle of Life and Motion, in men and in the world besides?

In its most *impersonal* view (and so, presumably, most philosophic), his answer may be given: the real essence

[1] Represented alternately as aspiring and weak, or rebellious and thwarting. See my article on "Subordinate Dualism," in Dr. Sanday's last volume of *Studia Biblica*.

[2] Qualities boldly vindicated for them in the *Sophist*.

of things, the real stable principle which calls up this Ionic manifestation of ceaseless process,—birth, growth, decay,—is in their idea or purpose; and if pressed, he would add, *moral* purpose. But is it not true to-day that purpose, ideal design, dissociated from a Personal and Benevolent Will, is to the mass of mankind wholly inconceivable? We only enter into the purpose, the ideal design in Nature, because we, as intelligent beings, are entering into the Mind of God, the counsels of Deity; not as an impersonal essence of unconscious Goodness (this ambiguity is at the root of all later Platonic thought), but as a Wise and Merciful Creator, pleading with Man, and leading persuasively, not by way of compulsion, the steps of Nature towards the attainment of perfection.

§ 15. But from this definite *personal* hypothesis[1] Plato was prohibited by certain *à priori* assumptions, which coloured this entire period of Greek theology. God must not *actively* interest Himself in the work of Creation, nor must His subsequent providential care be too minute, nor must His *Will* be exercised in the task, for Nature is His inseparable, eternal Correlate. I am aware that the splendid and audacious Creationism of the *Timæus* contradicts this, but Plato there (never troubling to be wholly consistent) is giving free play to his *personalist* and animistic tendencies, of which in his strictly philosophical moods he is half ashamed. And yet comparing, for example, the *Philebus* with the *Timæus*, the severely logical with the mythical, who can doubt that the ultimate problem of Final Causation is left unexplained in the former, and receives a satisfactory answer in the latter alone? There is no reason alleged for the initial, original movement of *Πέρας* amid the

[1] Into which modern thought is settling down after a mystical and pantheistic reaction against Materialism.

Ἄτακτον: nor is any comprehensible impulse (which may explain the struggle of cosmic process) introduced to account for the turning of the One into the Many. Here the writer is purely mathematical: purely Pythagorean. The evil day is thereby put off: but in the end there is a *nodus insolubilis* when the question of Matter arises, and we have to consider its participation in Ideas, and its method of so partaking.

§ 14. We need a Principle of Movement, of Life: and if an "explanation," in the true sense of the term, is to be given, we shall be restless and unsatisfied until we can repose in the conception of a Personal will, working for a beneficent object. For let us briefly examine what we mean by "Explanation."

It was, for instance, no real *explanation* to declare, with Anaxagoras, that Intelligence presided at the birth of the Universe. Until we proceed further to qualify this intelligence as Good, no object has been served, no advance has been made.—we must add, the *Rational* as above all Ethical: God as Thought working ceaselessly for the Good.—a commonplace to-day among spiritualists of all kinds, but, just then, a singularly brilliant and audacious contribution to philosophic thought on the part of two men, Socrates and Plato. The gradual oblivion of this principle, this necessary qualification of Mind, the *worthlessness* of mere intellection or contemplation in post-Platonic times, is at the root of the discontent and *practical* selfishness of Individualism which arises in the Hellenistic age: the shifting of interest from a benign Deity, in whom the world's course was explained, first to Nature, and next and necessarily (for Nature explains nothing) back to the suffering individual, in the perfectly parallel path of pietistic resignation (the later Stoicism) and of animal simplicity or luxurious living (Cynics or Epicureans). To *explain* satisfactorily to himself, the

reflecting man interprets the world in reference to his own *personality*, and to his own advantage.

§ 17. Setting himself (as he clearly shows in the *Phædo*) to qualify morally and teleologically the abstract postulate of Anaxagoras, Plato often appears to sacrifice the notion of *efficient* to that of *final* Cause, and does indeed lend (in spite of his own protests on the *priority* of goodness and intelligence) some countenance to the later Xenocratean speculation, which, as we shall see, places these at the consummation only. To his own satisfaction (though, as it seems to us, with singular ambiguity), he explained how the world arose from, and tended to, the Good; but in his emphasis on the *moral* end, he left the problem of *causation*, of real *efficiency*, unsolved. And it may fairly be asked, in this qualifying of the will-less unmoral Νοῦς of his predecessor, Did he succeed better in including the Final Reality within positive and intelligible categories? Does he, in a word, make the *Goodness*, the Final Purpose of the "Creator," clear and manifest, or place it beyond all doubt? Is not this quality an arbitrary imposition, an *à priori* assumption, untested by experience, or indeed by argument, but *presumed*, in order to cloak a suspicion of the opposite, the old inherent Greek Pessimism.[1] It is *Goodness* apart from the individual, the singular; and except to the mystic,

[1] Eurip. *Cresphontes*, Didot, p. 728 : 848 :

Ἐχρῆν γὰρ ἡμᾶς σύλλογον ποιουμένους
τὸν φύντα θρηνεῖν, εἰς ὅσ' ἔρχεται κακὰ,
τὸν δ' αὖ θανόντα κ. πόνων πεπαυμένον
χαίροντας εὐφημοῦντὰς ἐκπέμπειν δόμων.

From Clem. Alex. *Strom.* iii. 3 :

Τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι κρεῖσσον ἢ φῦναι βροτούς.
" Ἔμοιγε νῦν τε κ. πάλαι δοκεῖ·
παῖδας φυτεύειν οὕποτ' ἀνθρώπους ἐχρῆν
πόνους ὀρῶντας εἰς ὅσους φυτεύομεν.

emotional nature of the master himself, this postulate brought no justification of the Cosmic Process to the reflecting or suffering mind; and this consolatory and encouraging result, and nothing else, is the common end of all Religion and all Philosophy.

§ 18. For in this system there is no original principle, no impulse, of *Movement*. Distrusting the prevalent Animism of popular belief, wise men discarded the notion of προαίρεσις altogether, in which alone consists true explanation,—a reference of things *without* to the only ultimate fact of experience *within*,—the Will striving after what it believes to be best for itself. The deliberate Creative personality of the δημιουργὸς certainly recedes into the background among Plato's immediate successors; vanishing (as an unphilosophical superstition) into the region of legend and myth; and yet without this *efficient* cause the co-operation, or rather the *blending*[1] of the two domains, "idly confronting," is beyond our conception. The order in the universe, which we acknowledge as the very condition of *Knowledge* and the only foundation of *morals*, is neither empirically established nor rationally proved. An Ethical category is hastily imposed on phenomena by a religious and inward assurance,—an act of the highest spiritual faith,—but which (like the Doctrine of God) is quite incommunicable to sober and prosaic inquirers.

§ 19. In a word, although it is quite possible to study Plato as a calm and sceptical critic, the sum of Platonic philosophy is not a philosophical conclusion at all, but the intrusion of a religious conviction. This is his permanent contribution to the development of

[1] Τὸ δὲ λοίπον ὑμεῖς, ἀθανάτῳ θνητὸν προσυφαίνοντες, ἀπεργάζεσθε ζῷα κ. γεννᾶτε τροφήν τε διδόντες αὐξάνετε κ. φθίνοντα πάλιν δέχεσθε, says the Creator to his obedient Dæmons in *Timæus*, 41c.

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Thought. Far be it from me to deny the legitimacy of this proceeding as an unwarrantable confusion of provinces. No such delimitation of the confines of Reason and Faith then existed; and the temperament of Plato—an *intellectual* scepticism combined with an *emotional* pietism—could arrive at no other conclusion, if he designed to cover the whole ground of man's practical experience. Like so many others, he silenced his doubts with the ardent professions of his mysticism: he forcibly overrode his suspicions. He professes to find (after, it must be allowed, a very insufficient scrutiny) that Goodness (in some unintelligible sense) was the secret Essence and the motive Principle of this visible world.

But is the idea of impersonal Goodness at all conceivable—Goodness, that is, unrelated to individual consciousness save by a *salto mortale* into a mystic region? Does the question of the Origin, *efficient*, and Destiny, *final*, cause of the Universe receive the smallest glimmer of illumination from this postulate? Without the hypothesis of a *single* will as the ultimate motor (no longer, indeed, of *myriad* wills, severally lurking behind each phenomenon), this assumption becomes valueless. Goodness, unaware of its eternal correlate, the struggling visible world, out of relation to the finite and singular minds of suffering or aspiring men, and (in spite of an arbitrary postulate) working towards no conceivable goal,—here is a useless, unphilosophic belief, an intrusion from the sphere of pure Faith, which hovers like a vapour for a moment over Greek thought, but is, and must be, whenever it reappears, speedily dissipated by the cutting wind of Empiricism, which does not exactly banish this ideal terminology, but insists that the ideas shall be purely intellectual.

§ 20. The problem is still,—the Principle of Motion.

Whence and whither? And it is this that Aristotle takes up, dispensing with the religious fervour which for a moment Plato had introduced. But with all this depreciation of the uncertainty, the ambiguous language, the *impersonality* of certain Platonic *utterances*,—judged by his immediate effect on his own school and by the reaction of Aristotle,—let us do full justice to the thoroughly *personal* allegory of the *Timæus* (by which, as I believe, he satisfies himself and his own instincts most completely), and let us be assured, too, that only on this path of Faith (the Practical Reason guided by Moral Will), however distasteful this behaviour may appear to Pure Reason, lies the direct road to the solution of the highest Mysteries.

Plato is religious; and here, in the eyes of cold speculators, lies the imperfection of his philosophy; but his real error lay in this, that he was only half-religious. "By the term 'Religion'[1] I shall mean any theory of Personal Agency in the Universe, belief in which is strong enough, in any degree, to influence conduct. No term has been used more loosely of late years, or in a greater variety of meanings." Plato would give but an ambiguous answer to the query, Do you use the term in this personal and practical significance? Reverence for the Ideal possibility (say, of mankind in its infinite development), abstract admiration for the inexhaustible reservoir of Nature's life, a dim belief that things are working for the "best" (a word used, like ἄριστον in Speusippus, in an entirely novel and arbitrary sense), *cannot be called Religion.* Such feeling is rather a form of cosmic or pantheistic emotion, marking a peculiar temperament given to secluded studies and meditation, from whose fawning piety and inadmissible (nay, despicable) resignation to the un-

[1] Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 107.

known, the reaction is inevitable, and thoroughly welcome as a wholesome corrective. Even the rebellion of Atheists against a spurious yet widely prevalent Calvinism has, as we have already mentioned, served a useful purpose.

§ 21. It is the *Impersonality* of Plato's religious philosophy that warrants, renders necessary, and completely justifies the change of standpoint, in this matter as in others, which we welcome in Aristotle.

The subjective consciousness, dissatisfied with a postulate which the facts of life contradict, reaches out towards an explanation in which it, the conscious spirit, can repose; or else will settle, not without a latent defiance of the divine counsels, in entire dependence on self.

The despondency, the subjectivity, of post-Aristotelian thought (for the epoch of contented optimism in *scientific* curiosity is only a moment of transition to a more *ethical* standpoint) is due to the denial of an interfering, an overruling Providence, to the substitution of self-sufficiency for mystic resignation, to the altered maxim, "Follow Nature," instead of "Become like God," —for all of which Aristotle is responsible.

Had not, indeed, this tendency appeared in Plato himself? We can trace the gradual retirement of the Ideas, as it were, from actual life, from contact with matter; they are restricted in number and influence, and are at last confined to qualities; and there is a final stage, where they are heard of no more—they have gone back to their own transcendental region. And significantly enough, and parallel to this recession of the active causes in created things, has not a new power arisen to dispute the sovereignty, the evil World-Soul, of which we have dark hints at in the latest writings of Plato and in the earliest of his successors? Matter,

once mere space, a condition of receptivity, is treated as a positive "principle of disorder confusing all things, by the side of the Order which sways the world." Nay, the strange and un-Socratic subordination of the part to the whole,—the depreciation of the single life,—is due to a growing distrust in the main doctrine of his exuberant youth. It is true he demands that this self-resignation in the Ideal State to public duty should proceed from loving and deliberate sacrifice of egoism; and be reflecting and virtuous, and not due to compulsion from without. But in the end, the community employs force to ensure its own interests, and these can be appreciated by but a small number, and conceded to, of voluntary choice, by still fewer. In short, the world-process, hastily qualified as good, has not been justified before the suffering individual (as the Sophists seem perhaps unconsciously to demand), nor has sufficient apology been made for the paramount pretensions and claims of the State upon the unquestioning loyalty of its citizens. Subject and object are still left in unreconciled opposition.

Book One

THE HELLENIC AGE: PLATONISM AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

CHAPTER VI

ARISTOTLE: SEPARATION OF THE *EFFICIENT* AND *FINAL* CAUSE; NATURE THE SOURCE AND PRINCIPLE OF LIFE AND MOTION

CHAPTER VI

ARISTOTLE

§ 1. PLATO, who expands the intelligence of Anaxagoras into intelligent goodness, nevertheless, as we have seen, does not succeed in reconciling these to the subjective consciousness. He does not say if he means the Final Principle of the world to be a person; *philosophically*, he shrinks from the natural conclusion of his *ethical* bias, by which man is the centre of the universe. To all but a very few thinkers, the notion of an *impersonal* intelligence and goodness is unsatisfactory; intelligence without consciousness, goodness without a definite design of mercy. These inconceivable efficients will be forgotten, and a genuine motor found elsewhere, the true source of life and motion. Now it is impossible to extract a dogmatic utterance on this all-important matter; in the Platonic myths and allegories, coloured with all the varied hues of the sensible world, wherein appears his predilection for the personal, the poetic, the concrete, the beautiful,—in these he is definite enough; but in the cold region of Pythagorean numbers, of logical forms, his system appears to exclude the idea of personality, of deliberate Will. But unless this idea be accepted, the whole idea of *intelligence* and of goodness becomes an arbitrary postulation. It is, after all, only by a pious act of faith, leading to the repose of resigned Quietism, that the subject can accept this explanation, become

reconciled to the world as it *is*. Plato desires him to look on the world as it *ought* to be; but he discovers this "idealistic hypothesis is in antithesis to given actuality. A more realistic theory of things is demanded."[1] Aristotle has recourse to *experience* as the canon of truth, rather than to *intuition*; and refrains from qualifying the Supreme Being,—from imposing categories upon Him for which everyday life gives no evidence.

In Plato's own school, long before Mr. Archer Hind and absolute Idealism, there were prophetic signs of a reaction. Xenocrates does not believe that Goodness presides at the creation of the world; it is rather to be considered as the object and goal of our cosmic process. Here we see the strange metaphysic of M. Vacherot anticipated: the non-existent Perfection being that for which all Creation longs, the never-to-be-realized purpose which exists in no mind, and can never come to actuality. Something similar to this is the Basilidian desire of all things for the God who *is not*,[2] meaning not so much a desire for annihilation, as a yearning to transcend themselves, to develop into the higher and unknowable region of infinite and ideal possibilities.

§ 2. Now we can see clearly that the centre of gravity is shifting. "What do I know of the divine purpose in creation, or what experience have I of the divine goodness? Before I can decide upon these points, I must examine not merely my own intuitions, or rather secret wishes, but things without, and, above all, the progress and development of Nature, so manifest, yet so mysterious, beneath my gaze. The half-Mythic and sublime *Δημιουργὸς* does not seem to me to express his meaning—the purport, the significance of the cosmic process—so

[1] Schwegler, *History of Philosophy* (Stirling's trans.), p. 93.

[2] Hippolytus, *Ref. Hær.* vii. 22: *Ἐκείνου γὰρ, δι' ὑπερβολὴν κάλλους κ. ὡραιότητος πᾶσα φύσις ὀρέγεται.*

clearly as you maintain! Nor is the State either, for me, so sacrosanct a corporation as you pretend, nor its aim so evident. I must eliminate, in true philosophic calm, this fatal passion and enthusiasm, this implication of emotion and reflexion; which only leads, in a futile struggle against Dualism, to a hopeless antithesis of the Ideal and the Real. I must calmly and impassively inquire, and explain in a purely intellectual fashion. I must occupy myself with the concrete; and I must study (like Euripides) man's character, the body politic, the Universe, the development of *Nature* above all,—*as they are*, without rash or hasty emotional presuppositions." Thus the centre of gravity changes; from a Providential explanation of the world as the work of Supreme Goodness, after all based upon a moral prejudice, and at times severely impugned by the facts of experience,—to a purely *critical* philosophy, proceeding on empiric analysis rather than intuitions of the moral sense, and intrusting the ratification or rejection of its conclusions to Reason alone. Aristotle is the type of this spirit of inquiry. His temper is scarcely human; he is rather an abstraction of impersonal Reason, almost a disembodied spirit, treading fearlessly in the infinitely great and infinitely little, leaving no department of Knowledge, of things human and divine, untouched by his resistless and transforming hand.

§ 3. The Philosophy of Socrates centres round personal goodness and moral duty; and of Plato, round the Supreme Goodness, *ἰδέα τἀγαθοῦ*, by the light of which all the process of the natural world, all the functions of man and the State, are to be interpreted. Aristotle *disqualifies* the Final Cause, and is mainly concerned with *Φύσις*,—a return to the old Ionic interest, tempered by a certain deference to the Anaxagorean *Deus ex machinâ*, Thought, as postulated for the initial movement of

physical development. It is not too much to say that, even from the view of Speculation, the chief characteristic of Aristotle lies herein; while to a student of the later religious philosophy, it is clearly his most marked peculiarity. Socrates is taken up with the prevailing interest in his own moral life, and in that of others. He directs attention to the world within, where Truth is found, after the false ideas of convention and ignorance are dispelled, by searching and impartial dialectic. In his own case, in happiest experience, he was conscious of the personal solicitude of God in his welfare: his mission itself was divine; and his personal hopes, standing in a region above and out of reach of argument,—which could neither strengthen nor assail their certainty,—were directed to an immortal life with the gods. It is (in spite of the implication of the *intellectual* and *moral* language, the expression of *virtue* in terms of *knowledge*) —it is a very definite correction of Anaxagoras and the Protagorean canon. Certain "*knowledge*" can only be obtained in the region of conduct in the moral life; and here, after all, the function of purely *scientific* inquiry is limited to purgation (*Κάθαρσις*). Nor does Socrates disturb the current theology: he accepts the gods of Olympus, but he gives them a master; he acknowledges a Supreme Will making for good, presiding over the numerous and distinct provinces, and controlling the several caprices of the lower divinities. Plato carries this correction of "Knowledge" a step further. In his system, or rather (as all veracious commentators warn us), in his *method*, Dialectic is mainly useful for clearing the ground; the conception of highest truths dawns in the soul spontaneously; Ideas, that is, are innate; and when we get rid of prejudice, and turn the eye of the Soul towards truth, there remains nothing to impede the full consciousness of their presence in her. We thus

see the purpose, the good intention, of each thing; and shall imitate the Creator, who is not a postulated *efficient* Cause, but the Supreme *Idea*, the Idea of GOOD, on which creation *is modelled*. Aristotle changes this slightly, and the whole of philosophy is altered in a moment; "on which Creation *models herself*." The lurking impersonal unreality, the ambiguity which we noticed in Plato, is here resolved: the Doubt whether God, the δημιουργὸς, is also the ἰδέα τἀγαθοῦ,—if not, whether *above* or *below* it,—is settled. The conception of the Divine Nature is one of pure transcendence: God ceases to be the active and interested cause of the world's life.

§ 4. In the great drama of existence, it is now *Physis* that is the principal actor; not merely because she is nearest to our observation, while God's ways, though nominally beneficent, are inscrutable; but because God had really little or nothing to do with Nature. The new watchwords are *Development* and *Progress*,—infinite advance towards a goal of indefinite perfection. It is Physis that is represented, in the otherwise prosaic pages of the Aristotelian notes, as sighing, yearning, aspiring after a "pattern in the heavens." The Deity—though by His perfection the cause of this discontent, this commotion, this stirring of unconscious and vague hopes—is Himself without active solicitude in the efforts of Physis after self-improvement,—indeed, after likeness to Himself. He is the centre of a magnetic attraction; by irresistible law, though unconscious that "virtue has gone out of Him," He draws out the latent potentiality of natural things; which reach their height in man, in his personality and consciousness. Here there is no "idle confronting" of two worlds, ideal and real; that is, the question how the Ideas produce and commingle —how they are present to, yet distinct from, natural

objects—does not arise. By a bold postulation (yet in singular agreement with experience), Aristotle solves the difficulty. The Platonic Ideas, which tend more and more to identify themselves with the wise and kindly Thoughts of a Supreme Intelligence, are brought down to earth, are separated from any notion of a Personal Deity, and are firmly and inextricably implanted in Matter,—form, indeed, part and parcel of the original equipment of the mysterious Substrate of existence. This is a very important change. Plato never attempts to systematize his views on Hylè. At one time, it is a mere reverberation of thought, a phantom, a shadow non-existent; at another and a later time, a malign influence, which thwarts the good designs of the Creator. But Plato in all such follows the probable, *μετ' εἰκότος τινὸς κ. εὐπρεπείας*,—he does not believe it possible for human reason to finally settle such questions; only this he knows, that his instinct gives him right intimation of the true solution, if not the solution itself; directs him infallibly on the path, though it may not bring him to the journey's end—*ἢ ταῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτ' ἄττα*. So these varying definitions of Matter—which, in its very nature, eludes definition—suggest not complete or systematized knowledge of the Substrate; but a conception of fluidity, rapid, unstable, transient, ever assuming new forms, and so infirm and untenacious of the Creator's implanted Ideas, that at times it seems to assume towards His counsels an attitude of deliberate and malefic hostility.[1]

§ 5. Again, in the idea of Deity there is a similar obscurity: the conception wavers between *positive* and *negative* qualities, between the (so-called) allegorical presentment of a beneficent Person and that impersonal

[1] Platonism is ever ambiguous about Ignorance and Vice, about *ἔνδεια* (*negative*), and Rebellion (active, *positive*).

view which so widely permeates the later Platonism. Aristotle does not speak in metaphor about God, but, instead, he *personifies Nature*, and uses about her the language of personal consciousness: she seems, to him, aware of her imperfection, and is ever striving on towards an unattainable Ideal, the heavenly παράδειγμα. Indeed, Nature is to Aristotle a reflection of the Socratic pupil, dimly alive to his shortcomings, and, little by little, fashioning himself more closely after the model of an Ideal. There is a strong vein of poetic sentiment in the Philosopher so often styled the "mere Empiric"; and of all his many and magnificent contributions to the development of Thought, none perhaps has exercised so potent an influence as this fancy:—the strivings of Nature after a distant Ideal, the struggle of the Will-to-live. It coloured the whole of later chemistry and scientific inquiry with half-personified notions of attraction and repulsion, affinity and disagreement; it almost atoned, by its introduction of a *sympathetic* element, for the banishment of the nymphs and fauns and dryads, who (as in the Fetish), lurked unseen behind natural objects, half friendly, half hostile to man. Again, it led (there can be no doubt) to that strange yet so logical apotheosis of Nature, as the kindly parent of mankind, whose laws, discovered and obeyed, give perfect happiness. This Nature-worship (in its more philosophic and not instinctive orgiastic sense), animated by real enthusiastic admiration (and not by trembling hopes and fears of propitiation), so utterly alien to the original despondency of the Greek mind,[1]—this love of Nature, I say, becomes in later times ever and again a sort of rebellion against the harsh edicts of a Deity who is only *nominally* moral, and culminates when it finds a champion in Bruno or

[1] With all deference to the hasty optimism of Goethe and subsequent writers on the Golden, the Classical, age.

Vanini, or, to-day, in some apostle of Cosmic Emotion. It is the inevitable sign, and sometimes precursor or herald, of an *impersonal* reaction against interest in the subject: may sink to corybantic depths, or rise (if we may so say) to religious heights of a sensuous Mysticism, with which it is frequently allied. It glories in the insignificance of man; and the rapturous exaltation and eulogy of self-loss in the bosom of Universal Nature is a kind of fierce and fanatical rejection of the doubtful privilege of personality. The aim of the votary is to sink his *particular* and worthless life in the abyss of *catholic* existence.

§ 6. For this tendency Aristotle is responsible, and not the early Ionian speculators. The Ideas of Plato do not live apart in a world of their own; nor are they, again, mere subjective notions, generalizations in which we, by laws and conditions of our thoughts, express, define, classify things without. They are *qualities inherent in nature*, struggling by vague and indefinite impulse to realize themselves. They are (as Plato wished to make them) sources and causes of all life, all development; not because they send down influences from a transcendental region into a chaotic Substrate below, evoking order and eternity, by succession and inheritance, out of once hopeless confusion; but they are *in* Matter itself, inseparably implicated with it: Form and Matter, two sides of one object, the "whirring loom" of the phenomenal world. It will be seen that here also, in this deification of Nature, no true explanation is given. An explanation, as we saw, to be satisfactory, must be a reference to a *personal* will, to a motive, to a design; in a word, the only interpretation of things that can be accepted as ultimate must be *teleological*, and (by its very nature) can be only problematic, tentative, hypothetical, guarded by a warning, *ταῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα.*

Aristotle, by excluding such uncertainties from the domain of scientific inquiry, restricts himself to experience. His so-called explanation is an *assumption of the facts*: of the existence, the eternal existence, of the World as we have it. The doctrine of its temporal and purposive origin[1] he deliberately rejects. Thus, with the questions of the beginning, duration, purpose, and destiny of the Universe (problems at least tentatively discussed by Plato), he refuses to occupy himself. He will not be entangled in such profitless debate. For him the Visible is everlasting and uncreate; the Ideas of things, inherent in the material, not entering from without; the real and the ideal eternally implicit, inseparable;—and the centre of gravity has thus passed, from an anthropomorphic hypothesis of a Benevolent Creator (a novelty in Greek Thought), to a bare unproven postulation of Nature's vague, indefinite yearning after perfection. So true is it that the human mind, when adult and self-conscious, cannot help reading itself into things, cannot help *personifying* the ultimate principle. Animism is an invincible law of Thought when it enters the domain of Natural Science or Ethical Practice, and deserts the frigid formality of Pure Logic.

§ 7. The Ideas of Socrates (if I may be allowed the term) are general expressions, reached by examining particulars, and finding the common notion which underlies all and several; the method is called ἐπαγωγή, or induction; and proceeds from familiar objects, through various manifestations of the principle, to a certain clear apprehension of what it is, that makes them, all in their peculiar way and varying degree — just, good, holy. Plato takes these subjective conceptions and gives them external validity: they exist in our mind, *because* they have before existed in the Universal or Creative intel-

[1] To which, I believe, Plato leans, in spite of Mr. Archer Hind's opinion.

ligence—in a word, he combines the (apparently) *speculative* problem of the origin of knowledge, with Theology and a *moral* theory of Creation. "Virtue is knowledge," taught Socrates, but not individuals' knowledge, or mere capricious momentary impression; this was just what he wished to correct. Whose knowledge, then? That of aggregate humanity, (might appear to be Socrates' answer.) Plato went further, and definitely identified Ideas (general terms, which include and classify visible objects and the corresponding names, titles, and classes in use among men; and so commonly understood by all, even the most ignorant, when he examines his own mind) with something above either the objective or subjective existence—with the final union of both in God. One by one the Ideas of relationship and material objects disappear, and only those of *purpose*, of *moral* aim, survive; and in this development of the Platonic theory, clearly seen in his *Dialogues*, we trace the growing conviction that the Centre and Author of the Universe alone can explain the secret of cognition: that we are able to know because we are a part of Him, and so because He first knew. He believes that, after all, in spite of man's attempts after certainty, the only sure knowledge he can attain is ethical,—a penetration, not into the processes of the Creative Intelligence, but into its Moral aim and purpose. But Aristotle, scarcely seeing whither Plato was tending,—towards a religious or occasionalistic theory of Knowledge,—separates the Ideas from the unifying Creative mind, or, if you prefer, from the universal principle, the Idea of Good; and transfers them into real existence in the natural world, granting to them only a fitful, reflected, and precarious existence in our mind, which attains truth, not by musing on itself, but by outward industry in accumulating instances and reducing details to order. Knowledge is, then, possible

only to the accurate student and investigator. To interest in man and his affinity to the Divine nature, succeeds physical research.

§ 8. From this radical change of front with regard to the true study of man, arise all the peculiar features of the Aristotelian system. Plato's text had been ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ; it will be found that philosophy after Aristotle accepts the new reading, ζῆν ὁμολογουμένως τῇ Φύσει, *vivere congruenter, convenienter Naturæ.* The motive or purpose in creation is a subject dismissed from all discussions. The world is considered rather as the necessary correlate to the pure spiritual nature of God. The disappearance of the theory of a temporal and temporary creation,—indeed, of the succession of perishable worlds,—is significant of a new conception of the Cosmos, eternal and of itself divine, not a means to an end, not developing slowly towards some consummation or catastrophe, but the inseparable attendant on the Divine Spirit,—always, here and now, perfect and immortal. There is no effort of will, no intention, in a concomitance, in an everlasting coexistence. A motive of goodness is exchanged for the operation of Natural Laws; to discover these "statutes and ordinances" is to attain happiness, the Blessed Life;—either of speculation, such as Aristotle hymns in the tenth book of the *Ethics*, or of practical accommodation of oneself to the general rules prevailing in the Universe, and which, as they cannot be altered (or indeed interpreted to suit one's own convenience), are discovered only to be obeyed. Happiness is thus found in conformity to Nature, in examining and following natural laws: Conscious life, whether *speculative* or *active*. It is no longer viewed as participation in the Idea of Good regarded as consciousness of the benevolent purpose of God, and (so far as man is capable) imitation of His Goodness. Plato

had seen the Divine Purpose (always to him so intimately connected with *man*) chiefly in the Body Politic, not in the beautiful yet elusive transformations of physical development. The individual, the rebellious subjective self-will, is to be bent into conformity with Social, not with Natural, Law. That is the Unity in which God's aim is best shown. Beyond the limits of his city a man need not stray for objects of dutiful care: the world was circumscribed within its walls. But Aristotle—acute, sagacious, unbiassed, interested to an amazing extent in the attainment of Causes, the study of ætiology, the calm impartial scrutiny of phenomenal succession—puts aside the search for motive,[1] and, advancing far beyond the narrow confines of Hellenic patriotism, becomes a citizen of the larger world of Nature, and sees an example to be followed by the Stoics in their cosmopolitan views of the Universe as the true home of man. The sage is now consciously *set over against* the vulgar crowd, the πλῆθος ἰδιωτῶν. The missionary zeal, the religious duty to others, which Socrates and Plato maintained by life and precept, has entirely evaporated. Like God Himself, the sage retires from active well-doing, or interested championship of the Right, into the seclusion of emotionless intelligence.

§ 9. These doctrines are at present scarcely presented in an explicit or definite form. Aristotle does not discourage a modified sympathy with the common life and the duties of a citizen; but the moral and social nature of man is not the highest: ethical virtues (here is a point adopted by the later Platonists) are but as stepping-stones to an unimpeded and tranquil exercise of the ratiocinative faculties. There is no trace here of the belief that man is truly man, God truly divine, chiefly by

[1] After all, not a subject for Science; rather, as we have seen, a voluntary interpretation, of our own choice and free-will.

the development, or the possession, of moral excellence. The Religion, if we may so say, of this scientific philosophy, could not become a universal one; it appealed to a very small number, and could only hope for a restricted influence, on certain temperaments. Intellect, Knowledge for its own sake (and this a knowledge, not of design, but of facts, of material causes, of series, of processes)—this is the ideal life. As for descent into the cave for the benefit of others, Aristotle would scarcely countenance such an interruption to the serenity of the Blessed Life. And since the exercise of the pure reason is the highest life for man, two things follow:—(1) Competence, health, leizure, must be assumed, must be presupposed,—they are an indispensable preliminary to the studies of the wise man; in a word, Fortune must be pacified and propitiated, or rather, is postulated as being in her very nature equitable and clear-sighted; (2) the majority of mankind, blessed with no such immunity from honest toil, are thereby, and by the very nature of their lot, shut out from the true, or at least the highest, life of Happiness. For, be it noticed, Aristotle is the earliest to recognise, with his usual keenness, that Philosophy takes its rise in the *demand of the individual life for gratification*, for the acknowledgment of the claims, which it makes on the *social* and the *natural* world. Personal, conscious, subjective happiness is the aim. This he places in the unimpeded development and operation of our faculties, peculiarly human; that is, the life according to reason—impassive, self-centred. He believes (with his own successful experience of life, royal favour, good health, influence, and the delights of learned leizure and respectful pupils) that the good purpose (if we may so say) in Nature is obvious to all. He finds the impulse for self-development met by abundant provision in the world

around us for its fullest satisfaction. He has no problems of hardship, of injustice, of persecution and martyrdom, to drive him (as Plato was driven) from a *scientific* to a *religious*, a *pietistic*, explanation of life.

§ 10. The "purpose" of nature receives only a vague recognition. It is, in point of view of consolation and encouragement, a poor substitute for the personal interest of a Divine Being in the single life,—on which basis alone can anything be built worthy the name of Religion. Controlled by natural laws (which are only assumed and not explained), we occupy here a domain in which Chance and Fortune are allowed great power: Divine Providence does not trouble itself with the sublunar sphere. The earnest and simple piety of Socrates, directed to gods who were *personal* friends, evaporates with Plato in the *impersonal* adoration of abstract goodness; and thus weakened, in Aristotle disappears altogether. God is a necessary postulate for *science*, but has little or no connexion with *practical* life. For the guidance of this, the sage must depend on himself, his own resources, and his more or less successful compromise or compact with the "God of this world," with Fortune, who was supreme over all external things. It is seen, then, how the metaphysic of Aristotle (the search for antecedents and subordinate causes) differs from Plato's devotional inquiry into, or rather instinctive assumption of, moral and beneficent motives.

§ 11. Certain tendencies, then, in post-Aristotelian schools, may be with confidence predicted: the wise man, desiring happiness, has not to reckon with God or with his fellow, but rather with a new power, Nature. *What is her relation to the single life?* How insecure the wise man's happiness, as it lies at the mercy of a blind potentate, and not in the hands of a personal, or even an abstract, benevolence! But the postulate of the goodness

of Nature and her preservation of the sage from tiresome annoyance in life, from all interruptions to his speculative ease, clearly depends for confirmation upon the facts of experience. Besides, the new Cosmopolitanism—recognising, with more or less sincerity, in every man a brother, and in the human affinity a better title to esteem than petty, local, or civic connexion could produce—will demand that this Guide of Life, Philosophy as practical Wisdom, shall find out universal precepts, and not merely concern herself with class-legislation for a very small, a necessarily restricted, number of favoured men of leizure. "We seek human happiness; for every man *as* man—even for the slave—we seek the realm of true freedom; and we ask how can man be still happy, not in *accordance* with Nature,—we despair of this,—but in *spite* of her persecution."

§ 12. Yes; Φύσις was the new power with which individual man had to reckon, but in this insecure region this sage's tranquillity is seriously imperilled. There was no direct and obvious correspondence between merit and recompense in the things of the world. To a rancorous asceticism, which indignantly makes a virtue of necessity, is to succeed a somewhat calmer mood, in which is examined the emptiness and futility of these "outward," and to us "alien," gifts of Fortune: they are dismissed without a sigh, as beyond our power either to summon or to retain, as wholly *external* to our true *inward* well-being; and the entire interest of the sage is concentrated (as in the Monks of Mount Athos) upon a single luminous point,—an impassible Free-will. For on some stable and secure foundation must be built the *Summum Bonum*, the happiness of conscious Man, the freedom of the Reason. And because men could not yet abandon themselves[1] to a meaningless Universe, the abode merely

[1] As some appear prepared to do now.

of blind Chance,—the prison-house of the spirit, which struggles in vain for freedom,—therefore they refused to recognise the culpability of Nature, (who has thus taken the place of God.) "Not the Queen, but the malversation of her ministers, is responsible for the distress of the people; or perhaps her enemies are to blame." So in this new development we shall see a curious and anomalous inconsistency: there grows up a personification of a Power supposed to be hostile to Nature (though in reality it is identical or inseparable), Fortune, who is presumed to interfere with the maternal designs of *Φύσις*. Against this impropitiable and capricious goddess are directed the venomed tongues of a thousand angry and indignant philosophers; in a certain phase of Scholastic declamation, in theatrical challenges to Fortune to come and wreak her utmost spite. The original and smouldering suspicion of the Greek mind—that the gods were jealous, and looked with disapproval on human improvement, prosperity, and its heroic author, Prometheus—breaks forth again in the new hatred of this cause of inequality and injustice. To this power is transferred both reverence and blasphemy from the *rois fainéants* in the palace of Epicurus. The gods are treated either with a solemn ostentation of respect or a scarcely concealed supercilious disdain; for the Stoic sage man is, in virtue of his deliberate and conscious rectitude, more excellent than Zeus himself. They are in fact dismissed from consideration as beneath notice. All acrimonious attack is directed against the new imaginary monarch of the sublunar sphere; and all philosophy becomes an earnest search for security, for an impregnable battlement for the beleaguered human race against a faithless, cruel, pitiless foe.

It is pathetic to note how long Nature was exonerated from all share in this odious tyranny. Still, as a more

powerful than she had been discovered (the "strong man armed"), the new Christophers gradually lose sight of Nature, and concentrate attention on her successor. They preserve only certain meaningless formularies of an obsolete respect for the deposed Queen; and while their whole practical wisdom is concerned with avoiding Fortune's darts, they mutter allegiance to a Power which has long ceased to interest them.

Book Two

THE HELLENISTIC AGE

CHAPTER I

THE FORTUNES OF THE ACADEMY AND OF THE PERIPATETIC SCHOOL

CHAPTER I

THE IDEA OF THE TRANSCENDENCE OF THE DIVINE GIVES PLACE TO PURE NATURALISM OR POETIC PANTHEISM

§ 1. I HAVE now to examine the fortunes of the old Academy and of the Peripatetic School; and to search for the tendencies latent or expressed in the disciples of Aristotle and Plato. We shall readily understand the surprise of the later Platonists at the misconception of Plato by his immediate followers. His own peculiar doctrines (as they were conceived by a later age) seem to entirely disappear; the Ideas, united and embraced by a moral notion of Divine Goodness, evaporate and lose their efficacy,—they are relegated to the category of numbers, or altogether denied; the pre-existence of the more precious half of things is abandoned, to give place to a Naturalism, cloaking itself under the nebulous mist of numerical abstractions; the standard of human behaviour was deliberately lowered in maxims which inculcate acquiescence in Nature, and directly herald the Stoic admonition; the idea of a benevolent Creativeness, guided by a practical and moral motive, becomes entirely obsolete; the good and the perfect appear last in Time,—the final *result*, and not the sovereign *cause*, of development, of the Cosmic Process; the World-Soul, pronounced either good or bad according to the temperament of each speculator, is now postulated as the only source of influence, and pronounced sufficient to account for the

phenomena of Nature; the special prerogative of human beings, Reason and affinity with the Divine Spirit in a peculiar sense, is discarded, and, in its place, man is bidden to recognise his relationship to the whole animal world, to which he is indeed closely bound by laws of transmigration, but is in no sense superior; the knowledge of God (or rather the intuition of the Divine) and immortality are no longer regarded as the distinctive privilege, the birthright, of mankind; a superstitious dietetic rigour betrays the retrogression of the School towards barbarous taboo and totemism; the radiance of morning prime, which Plato's confident and trustful Idealism had thrown over the shadowy or gloomy outline of things, passes away in a dull and sombre day, and ceases to enlighten, and indeed, interpret, the world of Nature to the inquiring spirit, illumining her darkest recesses; of the ardent social instinct (reposing finally on a religious sanction) there is now no vestige; a taste for erudition, for cold and abstract sciences, apart from human interest, or for natural investigation, occupies the attention of these degenerate grandchildren of Socrates. The influence of Pythagoras and Aristotle is far more evident than sympathy with Plato.

§ 2. But in revenge, as it were, for this expulsion of lofty human ideals,—concentration on unethical and impersonal processes of cognition,—a sombre hue creeps over the soul of the philosopher. The deification of the Actual has begun, and begets inevitable reaction, in extravagant Transcendentalism or complaining despair. Philosophy indeed originates in unconscious protest against this complacent content, this immersion in the present; and is it to be satisfied by a reflecting return to the very error which it arose to correct? Φύσις is indeed Divine and all-sufficing; and beyond it there is nothing but a vague world of numbers and rhythms,

vain and imaginary, yet sometimes conceived and described in strangely *local* and *material* terms: the realm of the divine (*τὰ θεῖα, τὰ ἐκεῖ*). But the Universe, below or within this mystical perfection, is not homogeneous. Aristotle roughly draws the line of sharp contrast between the higher and the lower domain: the sphere governed by Providence, and the inferior world, where he was obliged to allow the intrusion of unreasoning and therefore incalculable elements.[1] The antithesis is no longer between the real world and the beneficent design of God, the Ideal,—reposing unmoved in serene bliss on His bosom,—but between two almost hostile portions of the Visible universe. Faith in the transcendence (*χωρισμός*) of a supersensuous and unseen kingdom had indeed expired; but the natural and instinctive discontent of man—his contempt for any possession which he enjoys without trouble, or has inherited without conscious effort—leads the philosopher, in default of the encouraging doctrine of a future Heavenly home, to look upwards with yearning eyes to the heaven of stars and planets,[2] and seek a solace there. There are traces of sadness in Speusippus, to whom pleasure is evil; it is the "One that rules in Heaven, but the Dyad, female and mother of the gods, that bears sway in this lower world"; and we see an almost Indian renunciation in the *Summum Bonum*, *ἀοχλησία* (freedom from disturbance).

But passionate Star-worship combines with an almost Gnostic dualism in Philip of Opus. To him, the lower realm is evil. Like Plutarch (as we shall see in a later

[1] It may here be said, that to this critical or despairing examination of the capricious sovereign Fortune, and the exact extent of her dominion, is due the progress in Ethical studies which marks the Subjective Schools.

[2] This same curiously physical adoration for the luminous, seemingly *upper* or superior, parts of our universe will recur in the Roman age.

chapter), he regards the world-Soul as malignant. To escape "hence and be with God," is to return to the Stars, whose brilliancy and unerring order gave hopes of a justice and a certainty not to be found here. Others, unable to derive comfort from the contemplation of celestial rhythm, had recourse to Superstition; and opened the door to a motley herd of lower divinities, which pure Philosophy had once expelled with contempt. "Spirits, bad and good, must be publicly propitiated"; and a fantastic belief in demons[1] took the place of the Idea of Good.

§ 3. This curious development of Platonism reposes on a basis of pure Pythagorean Pantheism,—on a Naturalism more or less poetically enshrouded by the language of pious devotion and mystic number. All the world was akin. Through the various tribes of animal, man, and perhaps plant, there flowed the same stream of unconscious vitality, welling from an inexhaustible reservoir of Life; each seeming particular manifestation returning thither again, to be absorbed in the parent-river, or surviving (such was the tenacious hold on the human mind of antique belief in immortality!), in a sort of allegoric or vicarious manner, in a succession of lives, fitful specializations of the Supreme Force. It made no difference, in practical outcome, whether these sporadic puffs of vital breath (so to speak) were dissipated in the thin air of the environing spirit, itself permanent and indestructible; or were wafted by it, still preserving a semblance of individuality, which yet baffled all imagination, into other bodies and other material circumstances. The doctrine of Transmigration is after all but a senti-

[1] These intermediaries of the higher and lower domain are strictly Platonic; they unite in themselves the qualities of the territories which they connect, and, by their capricious volition and uncertain tutelage, perhaps reconcile man to his lifelong slavery to the Stars.

mental glozing of the unwelcome doctrine of Atomism, and the mortality of Souls; one of those tricks or illusions of unreal language by which Pantheism attempts to save itself from its own conclusions,—an unconscious testimony to the eternal worth of the Individual.

The regrettable vacillation of Plato on the question of conscious personal life and its significance in face of an all-embracing Idea, his confusion of Efficient and Final Causes (or rather his elevation of the latter above the former), his inculcation of abstracted meditation on impersonal truth, and (if the truth must be told) his tendency to depreciate active life in Society, which he yet strove to hide even from himself,—all these germs are bearing fruit in a return to Naturalism, from which self-conscious Thought has in vain struggled to escape. The successors of the two great masters, tired, as it would appear, of waiting until the glorious vision (so concrete and highly coloured!) of a supersensuous realm should unfold itself before their gaze, denied the efficacy and interested activity of the Ideal sovereigns, or confined them in their material realizations, or indeed elevated them, in superstitious reverence, above the category of existence altogether. The conception of a world-purpose latent in Nature, and to be honestly furthered by the spontaneous interaction of man in Society, disappears entirely. The Universe, as we saw, was eternal; the Sum of Life was for ever the same,—the reservoir of its treasures could neither receive addition nor suffer exhaustion. Man, or rather the reflecting sage, deprived of a wholesome spur to generosity, patient toil, or self-denying patriotic effort, settled down into that Indian indifference which, as contrasted with the native buoyancy and eager enterprise of Hellenic youth, had especial fascination for Hellenic philosophers. In a

world which he could not alter, contemplation of its eternal self-identity was the only path of escape from the illusion of responsibility, or the despair which quiet meditation was apt to beget. Man was a spectator of the Universe, as Pythagoras long ago had told Leo the Phliasian. An abiding satisfaction might be found in discovering the rhythms or numerical pulsations which, as universal laws, underlay the ruffled surface of life. Other duties, to himself or Society, he had none. There was no refuge from this paralysing consciousness of futility; and yet perhaps some solace was found in the humbler efforts of Polemo, the converted sinner, after expression of ethical truth to the exclusion of scientific dialectic. The truest relief was to be found[1] only in that welcome Scepticism which burst the fetters of dogma, which exposed the fallacies of pietistic Monism (in which nothing was explained or justified), and which finally led back the sage to the safer harbour of the common life. The only safety, the only chance for the joyousness of free development, lay in the denial of that Knowledge which proved so oppressive.

§ 4. If this was the fortune of the disciples of Plato, the Idealist, far more shall we expect to find this hopeless divinization of the Actual among the successors of Aristotle, the Empiric. Nor are we deceived. The same dominant sense of Unity broods over the physiology of Theophrastus, of Dicæarchus, of Strato. The instinctive claims of man to a certain ill-defined supremacy in Nature, give way at once before the now current doctrine of Consanguinity (ὁμοιότης); in virtue of which man is related and cognate to other forms of animal life, but possesses no intrinsic significance which should entitle him to advance these claims on a *special* Providence. On the contrary, much effort is spent upon refuting the

[1] In Arcesilas.

arrogant pretensions of human pride. Aristoxenus proves that the Soul is the body's harmony; a *product* or *result* (like the "Best" of Speusippus), not a *cause* or an *efficient*. Dicæarch, if we may credit Cicero, elaborated the arguments against immortality; and disguised his own views under the person of Pherecrates of Phlia, pronouncing in favour of the total extinction of the individual soul. Strato returns to the naïve Naturalism of Ionic speculators; and in common with all the immediate successors of Aristotle, dismisses as contemptible and impotent the attenuated spiritual causes, supposed to influence the world's material development. For Aristotle, marking a transition between the splendid Platonic transcendency and Stoic Positivism, has placed the celestial Beings, which *magnetize* (rather than *govern*) our nether sphere, entirely out of reach. They share the fate of the gods of Epicurus. Conducted to a remote and safe distance from practical life,—from all occasion of interference with our concerns,—they are speedily forgotten or altogether denied. Plato had much impaired the efficacy or interest of these strange beings—the Ideas—in the lower world, by gradually reducing their number, admitting only spiritual or ethical notions, and refusing to allow them direct consort or familiar intercourse with Matter. They had a world of their own; and those Ideas, which finally satisfied his critical requirements and qualified in his eyes as members of this spiritual realm, could not be expected, as heretofore, to condescend to ours. Aristotle protests that he "brings down," as Socrates recalled philosophy, the Ideas from an airy and visionary dreamland; yet does he not in effect rather leave the *realities* still there, transcendent, unexplained, self-sufficing, unmovable, and pin the *semblances* or accidental reflexions closely in material objects? It is the case of Hercules,

whose divinity lives in Olympus, whose shade is below in Hades. With these so-called *realities*, his successors dispense altogether. They concentrate their attention on *physical* phenomena, and transfer all allegiance to Nature, "Queen and Goddess of Mortals." Of the glory of the heavenly world we hear no more. The gates of light have closed again inexorably; and human imagination has to confine itself to sober prosaic experience, which in each successive teacher's doctrine seems more and more distasteful and unprofitable.

§ 5. And in consequence, thrown back on this every-day experience, and distrusting the high prerogatives once claimed for our nature, the sage attempts to console himself with a certain cosmopolitan emotion,—deprecating the cruel sacrifices to *unknown* deities of our *known* brethren, the animals, recognising beyond the narrow limits of a State a wider affinity in which all men might share, whatever their race or nation,—and thus in a tentative fashion suggesting the notorious principles of later Stoicism (into which, itself quite without originality, emptied the confluent rivers of Academic and Peripatetic Thought). He takes a real pride in the task of humiliating human pretensions, and even as he extols above measure the sagacious prudence and insight of the animal world, gives up to them the last exclusive treasure of human nature, τὸ νοεῖν.[1] Man is now finally on a level with the rest of the Creature; or is he not even reduced below the rest of the animal tribes, by a certain resourceless nudity, and exposure on every side to attack, unprotected by the prophetic instinct which assures the safety of more favoured beasts and birds? Eudemus alone maintains a connexion between Ethics and Theology, and apparently supports the idea of the pre-existence and transcendence

[1] If we may believe Plutarch, *de solertiâ animalium*, § 3.

of the higher principles. For the most part, the Peripatetics neglect the study of that which is distinctively *human*,—the *Ethical* interest in philosophy. They are neither social nor moral, but physical, speculators. They are immersed in the contemplation of the impersonal processes of Nature, and in exploring those secrets of her working, which, when discovered, have no message of encouragement, warning, or advice for the single life. Refusing to differentiate the peculiar existence of the conscious subject from the realm of matter, to vindicate his freedom from the laws of his environment, and restricting the exercise of his faculties to a vain classification of external objects,—they attempt to soften the stern antithesis between our hopes or ideals and actuality, that antagonism or defiance which is the spring of all our unhappiness and all our progress. It is clear that this complacent attitude of affected reconciliation can last but for a moment, and that the awakening will be a rude shock to the optimistic gleaner of fragments of physical knowledge. This accumulation of facts—this discovery that "weights and movements consequent thereon" are sufficient to account for the phenomena of all life, natural or human [1]—remains to the end *dualistic*,[2] unappropriated by the full mental and moral consciousness of the philosopher. It is *Πίστις*, not *Γνῶσις*; and even the sage, seeking communion with absolute and abstract truth, cannot transform his intelligence into a mere machine for chronicling the routine of Nature: even he must have his human and lucid intervals. In the early days of his pure scientific interest, when the Cause of life and motion was brought down from the inaccessible heights of distant Ideas, and pronounced immanent in the bosom of things,—when the yet unexplored fields of genial Nature smilingly invited the enterprise of the student,—

[1] Cicero, *Acad. Prior.* ii. 38.

[2] Like all scientific knowledge.

reliance on the Cosmic Process was a cardinal doctrine. The *equipment*[1] of outward advantages for a complete realization of happiness betokens a naïve confidence in the new sovereign. And yet, even now, signs are not wanting of the gradual retirement of the sage into the fastnesses of his own being. Pure curiosity may be at the root of *scientific* interest as preferred to distinctly *human* concerns; but there is also ill-concealed distrust and suspicion as well. The gradual abandonment of the practical life, the avowed liking for celibacy, the absence of all effort to change the world, to improve Society—in these characteristics we see a growing "indifference to action," soon to become the main teaching of philosophy. "We can *interpret* the world as *spectators*; but we have no *influence* over it as *agents*; or, if the task be within our reach, it is not worth while to attempt it.[2] But the last stage of wholesale renunciation of an alien universe will never be reached by the Peripatetic. They will to the end excite ridicule or contempt in the sterner schools by their pathetic and wistful appeal to an impersonal Nature to respect the learned ease, the secluded studies of the scientist, and maintain his comfort, and protect his leizure from the conflicting interests of the practical life.

§ 6. Such, then, were the immediate followers of Plato and Aristotle. The Idealism of the former they extend to the extreme verge of non-entity, in will-less abstractions, and finally abandon altogether; while the revived Heraclitean Hylozoism of Aristotle they complete in a consistent Naturalism, eliminating every other motive and cause but physical weight, tearing away without ceremony the decent fiction of Transcendence with which their master had enshrouded his empirical conclusions.

[1] For which Theophrastus is so severely condemned by the Stoics.

[2] This is also the opinion of M. Renan, the student.

The dream of a spiritual realm—not the world *as it is*, but *as it ought to be*, the design of a wise Creator—had been discarded as an allegory, or a parable. The Platonists imagine etherial concepts,—"number moving itself," "extension shaped harmoniously by number,"—which are nothing but poetical phrases. The Aristotelians study facts, and reduce them to order; but do not justify the continual and unmeaning process of the world to the moral sense of man, though they continually demand that it shall be in agreement with this. When in the Academy, Polemo revives interest in the peculiar life of man: he deserts the high ground of Platonic theology; and initiates that famous and unfortunate phrase, *Live agreeably to Nature*, which will be in future the shibboleth of later Greek speculation—no one perfectly understanding what is meant by Nature, and (each according to his own temperament) rejoicing, playing, or despairing in the ambiguity of the admonition. Rebuffed at the very outset of the search by the impenetrability of external Nature, appalled by her aimless yet sublime eternity, and convinced that an alliance with her incalculable and capricious sovereign, Fortune, is a hopeless subterfuge,—the entire bent of the new age will be towards Self-Sufficingness. The wise man seeks to establish his happiness, frankly acknowledged to be the sole end of his untiring pursuit, in an unassailable position: to retire from a perilous association with things independent of his control, or maliciously tantalizing him by brief and illusory delights. While, on the speculative side, no small labour will be expended in proving that Nature, the entire region outside the sage's consciousness, is altogether unknowable. The wise man is now his own world; he neither knows nor desires anything outside himself.

Book Two

THE HELLENISTIC AGE

CHAPTER II

SCEPTICISM IN GREEK THOUGHT; AFFINITY WITH EASTERN PESSIMISM

CHAPTER II

ORIGIN OF DOUBT, WHETHER COMPLACENT OR PESSIMISTIC, AS A LEADING PRINCIPLE IN THOUGHT; AND THE THREE SCHOOLS OF RESULTING ATARAXY

§ 1. DOUBT among the Greeks arose not so much from a sense of "flamboyancy," the fragmentariness and transience of our impressions, but rather from a consciousness of Unity, vague, enthralling, and oppressive. A semi-oriental worship of the abstract One was the parent of Scepticism and its invariable attendant, *ἀπάθεια*. From the School of Elea issued the doctrine of Mistrust: the belief that the present world of phenomena was illusory, and that true wisdom consisted in a total indifference to things; which strongly recalls the Indian fakeer, though we miss, among the more sober Greeks, the extravagant details of asceticism and self-torture. Euclid of Megara, the devoted pupil of Socrates, rejects the Platonic compromise between the *One* and the *Many*, as effected in the Ideal theory. The influence of his master is clearly seen in the *moral qualification* of the one and only true Being,—a frozen crystalline ball in genuine Eleaticism,—to which he gave the names of the *Good*, *Wisdom*, *Mind*, and *God*. *Οὗτος*, says Diogenes Lærtius, *ἓν τὸ Ἀγαθὸν ἀπεφαίνετο, πολλοῖς ὀνόμασι καλούμενον, ὅτε μὲν γὰρ Φρόνησιν, ὅτε δὲ Θεόν, καὶ ἄλλοτε Νοῦν καὶ τὰ λοιπά· τὰ δ' ἀντικειμένα τῷ Ἀγαθῷ ἀνῄρει, μὴ εἶναι φάσκων.*

"All that was opposed to the Good he denied, saying that it did not exist"[1] Like the contemporary Cynic school under Antisthenes and Diogenes, the Megaric rejoices in the denial of experience, wrathful and indignant at popular injustice, impatient of superficial certainty. In both we see the Socratic interest in others chilled by a sense of wrong; the wise man is thrown back on himself, and, despairing of society and hating his fellow, engages in a perpetual ridicule of ordinary ways, or a continuous warfare against current opinion. "Between the *One* and the *Many*, there could be no association: the *Many* indeed *were* not, but only *seemed* to be: the sage is above experience, above the need of friends: isolated and alone, he is self-sufficing and feels no pain or misery: his goal is insensibility." In Euclid, in Antisthenes, and in the later Stilpo (who combines the *speculative* and *practical* rigidity of Megara and the Cynics), we notice a truceless warfare against Ideas, a perilous compromise, as it seemed to them, Plato's contamination of pure Truth.

The *One* could not be known through its *parts*, by gradual approximation to unity, through a knowledge of particulars. It must be taken in its absolute entirety, or not apprehended at all. Nor could the golden mean be accepted in the *ethical* life: all pleasure, all emotion, was bad; pleasure, indeed, was worse than madness. There was to be no parley with the seductive voices of

[1] We cannot help being reminded of the words of Plutarch, *de Virt. Mor.* § 2, illustrating, in a different sphere, the same passion for Unity and dread of Distinction, and formal differentiation, which characterizes the uncompromising Socratics — Μενέδημος μὲν ὁ ἐξ Ἐρετρίας **ἀνῃρει** τῶν Ἀρετῶν καὶ τὸ πλῆθος καὶ τὰς διαφοράς, ὡς **μιᾶς** οὔσης κ. χρωμένης **πολλοῖς ὀνόμασι.**

In this we have a curious anticipation of the later Neoplatonic doctrine of Evil as mere negation, or rather an excellent text to summarize it.

society, no concession to the tempting allurements of sense. Passionless calm, and renunciation of the actual course of things, defiant and inflexible resistance to the customary—such was the aim of this Indian phase of Greek thought and practice.

§ 2. But, leaving for a later survey the development of Cynic instinct into the reasoned system of Stoicism, let us notice the reappearance of theoretical Scepsis in Pyrrho of Elis, on whom the influence of Eastern apathy is abundantly shed. He seems to have been the earliest to enunciate the fruitful maxim of Indifference to external circumstances. The wise man, in this alien, illusive, or incomprehensible world, had one single duty: to resist impression with a virtue altogether passive; to preserve, whatever might befall him from the incognoscible realm without, his own serene stillness; to let nothing disturb his equanimity. Here, once for all, is laid down a doctrine which will be the basis of all subsequent Greek thought. Clumsily combined with an affected Naturalism (the maxim of Polemo adopted by the Porch), it will struggle to free itself from this association with outward things; and we shall trace the whole history of the School in the vacillating definition of Nature: "what am I to follow? My own nature? execute my specially human function (*οἰκεῖον ἔργον*)? or repose contentedly on things without?" It will be seen how, by degrees, a pessimistic doubt pervades the Stoic development, raising gloomy suspicions of the significance, the goodness of external Nature, and the presence of God in it; gradually withdrawing the wise man from the circle of its influence into the narrow sphere of his own consciousness; pronouncing finally that the World-Process cannot be known or justified; and enthroning the Divine in the tabernacle of the pure heart, instead of adoring it in the struggle (or the harmony) of Nature's unconscious forces.

From another quarter, certainly not from Stoicism, may be expected a final and serious attempt to reconcile man to an alien and unintelligible Universe.

§ 3. The Middle Academy reproduces and develops the Sceptical side of Plato, and it seems to us difficult to distinguish its principles from the tenets of professed Doubt. Where, in the nature of things, this School is forced to be constructive, it adopts the teaching of Stoicism; and thus—with an inconsistency which is, however, as easily pardoned as understood—agrees with and attacks the same rival. For as to the *general* positive content of moral systems, there has been no doubt since ethical reflexion began; nor indeed any very conspicuous advance.[1] In essentials, all honest schemes of ethical behaviour, that are not mere paradoxic defiance of routine, are substantially identical; the difference lies in this epoch in meaningless and innocent debate on the sufficiency of Virtue (a word, like Nature, still enshrouded in ambiguity), and her dependence, or partial independence, on external circumstance. The Scepticism, therefore, of the Academy was never dangerous or nihilistic. Instead of setting the wise man, who sees through the illusion of the pretended Real outside him, apart from his fellows, in isolated and melancholy grandeur, it only examines and criticizes opinions in order to set up a new standard,—the Probable (*τὸ εὔλογον*); nay, there are not wanting those who assert that, as with Plato so with Arcesilas, the *negative* and *sceptical* dialectic was but the preparatory training, the propædeutic, the discipline of the aspirant in philosophic mysteries before the complete communication of esoteric and recondite doctrine. But whatever this *positive* content might have been, such a tradition had certainly vanished a century later, when Carneades was teaching; that

[1] This is what surprises or disappoints many students of Christianity.

philosopher, who will ever be remembered as having administered to the Roman people the first unwelcome draught of Wisdom, in a denial of all definite truth. Of him it is said, that no one ever *did* know what he thought; his private views were completely concealed, even from his most intimate pupils.

§ 4. The later revival of pure Scepsis in Ænesidemus belongs properly to the third division, the Roman age, but may be noticed briefly here, as a reaction against the (fancied) Dogmatism of the Porch, to which the New Academy (at least in positive teaching of morals) had become unworthily enslaved. The brilliant and final expounder of this universal negation, Sextus Empiricus, will be seen in a later chapter to represent the Roman Empire, as it summons men back to a warm and living world, to a modified and temperate respect for the sanction and customary morality of Civic Life. Besides this, later Scepsis had, even as regards religion and the worship of the gods, a *constructive* function. While combating vigorously the futile Stoic commonplace of Providence, contradicted at every turn of experience, it performed this valuable service for religion and morals: it introduced a tolerant (if somewhat ironical) spirit into the wrangling of professors of Philosophy, and priests of various cults; it recognised good in every institution; a partial element of the whole truth (in its entirety unattainable) in all religion; and above all, by its candid avowal of the evil in Nature, and the difficulties of the present world, it prevented that disbelief in progress, that deadening worship of un-moral Necessity, that stupor of effort and vigorous enterprise, which always follows a hasty and superficial Monism, an optimistic deification of the Actual as "the best of all possible worlds." My task now is rather with that negative temper, which, taking no pleasure in the triumphs of its

own dialectic, seeing no asylum from universal despair in the common sense of mankind, settles down into apathetic indifference, which is not far distant from the mystic trance or lethargic stupor of the Oriental fanatic.

§ 5. I am now examining *Negation*, as issuing in pure passivity, or in ostentatious asceticism; as abandoning all forms of healthy social activity, as attempting without success to assuage the pain of *individual* life in the vast and untroubled ocean of the One, the *Universal*. For it is this Indian principle which lies behind the development of Greek thought from Plato to the Schools of pure Subjectivism. Acute self-consciousness did not arouse in the reflecting Soul a sense of his own *unique* importance and meaning; did not encourage him to develop his own *peculiar* gifts, in the fitting fields for their discipline and perfection; but concentrated his thoughts upon the formless and shadowy portraiture of *abstract* Man, devoid of all positive content. He was induced to deny any mission of humanity, except perhaps a reasonless obedience to unknown laws, the duty of performing amid much suffering a dreary round of everlasting existence—an order whose fictitious eternity was won at the cost of individual misery, of the sacrifice of highest and meanest alike at the altar of an inexorable law: Persistence through Change. There was no inner voice of consolation to whisper that the *single* life was of value because of its *special* dowry of gifts; was destined to co-operate with a divine purpose in working out a scheme of progress in the world of society, or in subjugating the unknown realm of Nature to human uses. In blind devotion to a purely *typical* excellence,—*ideal* man, without significance or mission in the wilderness of existing things,—the Greek sages stifled a true *individualism*, while they started avowedly from *subjective* needs; regarded as aimless any

effort to apprehend reality; and all alike, whether Stoic or Epicurean, Cynic or Sceptic, attempted, by eradicating all that was peculiar and idiosyncratic, and *therefore valuable*, in themselves, to attain to the untroubled calm and empty state of negative[1] repose, which was the object of their wearied yearning.

§ 6. Hitherto I have avoided all reference to the parallel history and political development of the Greek world; but it is impossible to neglect any longer its influence upon Thought. Whether republican forms of government ever existed in ideal perfection among the Hellenes, it is impossible to determine; certain it is, that actual historic evidence tells us nothing of such a state of things. The earliest records show unmistakable signs of conscious declension, of a widely-felt degeneration from a true standard, which had prevailed in former, and therefore happier and better, times. The Greek writings show little trace of that peculiar complacent acceptance of the present and actual as the best possible, which was once supposed by Classical reactionaries to be the secret of their eternal youth, their blythe contentment, their success in art. And in the frequent complaining retrospect, the heroic age of *individual* sturdiness and enterprise seemed to them the fairest period, the Golden Epoch in the Life of Humanity. Personal attractiveness and the glamour of a capricious and untamable wilfulness, then as now, exerted a disproportionate influence upon the fate of an entire people; and was all the more mischievous in its fascinations, as men sought relief from the monotonous equality of democratic institutions in the impulsive admiration of personality, and in spontaneous

[1] It is worthy of remark that almost all the Greek conceptions of the *Summum Bonum* are *negative*. It is arrived at by abstracting certain offensive or annoying incidents of our existence here. The modern craving for Liberty is liable to the same charge of indefiniteness.

homage to spirited daring, even though their own liberties were the price paid for the splendid spectacle. From this vulgar and enthusiastic applause of the Self-willed or Eccentric,—from which transports even the most sober Quakers of modern day are not wholly exempt,—the reflecting Philosopher turned away in disdain. He was wrapt in the vision of the ideal sage, and would not suffer this empty abstraction to be degraded by contact with reality, by association with individuals. When he claimed a complete independence from a despicable routine of common tasks, of social meetings, he felt within him the value and sacredness of his own privacy, but would have been puzzled to describe how he proposed to fill up the vacant leizure acquired by this immunity. There is in his philosophy a blank disc of indefiniteness; he is perpetually working almost as if impelled from within by some blind and unintelligent impulse to an inscrutable end: towards which he strains his utmost, but which, when reached and attained, is negative. As in modern political history, liberty has been pursued as a positive good, without a thought as to the future profit, value, use, exercise of the new-found and much-treasured independence. The sage has no interest in the welfare of the State; no concern in its continuance. Celibacy became more and more popular, as it always will in a reflecting Society, which, at its worst and at its best, falls below and rises above the prosaic respectability of the comfortable burgess. The wise man, citizen of a kingdom conterminous with Reality, was an exile nowhere; could point to a true home among the Stars; and recognised a brotherhood embracing not only the human race, but also the higher members at least of the animal creation. He anticipated, by his indifference or contempt, the disintegration which later befel Society; and set the example of a formal deference to Universal Nature, which

concealed a distaste for irksome civic duties, for the humbler and more exacting relations of life.

§ 7. Alexander was the truest type of the Hellenic race: Alcibiades, without his faults or failure, the perfect specimen of a heroic personality. Our estimate of his definite policy or rash enterprise may vary; but the effect of his brilliant success, of his notable achievement, is without parallel in the history of antiquity. For once, as it were, the "limit" so dear to earlier Greek minds seemed to be swept away: an infinitude, a boundless world-empire, spread before their gaze. The wearied and disquieted citizens of petty States, to whose common sense the opposition of Demosthenes appeared mere chivalrous Quixotism, hailed with delight the removal of the once impenetrable barriers, and expatiated in a larger world. Distant nations knew each other; and the Western mind felt the influence of Oriental Ideas. Amongst other features (not to overstep the limits and the purport of this chapter), the impassible calm and imperturbable serenity of the Indian anchorite provided the Greek sage with welcome confirmation of his own maxims—whether Yogi or Fakeer, Gymnosophist or Brahmin. The far-off inaccessible parts of the earth have always been conceived as peopled by tribes of more than human perfection. The Hyperboreans, the Fortunate Isles, the holy Serians, will occur as examples; Zeus visits in familiar intercourse the blameless Ethiopians; and the realm of Prester John, a potentate armed with spiritual and temporal authority, vacillates between central Asia and the remote sources of the Nile. On the edge, the confines, the margin of the habitable earth—so popular superstition fancied—might be found, if anywhere, the perfection and happiness denied to the interior races. The Gymnosophist, whose carelessness of death won the admiration of Alexander's

army, seemed the visible embodiment of this obdurate and impenetrable Apathy, which the most discordant sects agreed in praising as the fairest blossom of human development, the supreme condition of that poverty-stricken notion, the semblance that yet remained of human happiness. The earlier influence of the East (for example, on Democritus or Plato) was far surpassed in this new and sacred testimony borne to the Ideal of *Ἀταραξία* by the self-renouncing ascetics of India. Henceforward all practical and didactic philosophy will not establish itself on the dictates of common reason, but will in preference appeal to some heroic legislator or enthusiastic prophet,—will seek, in inspired documents of remote antiquity, in mythic legend of divine origin, in examples of far-off holiness, a sanction for a code of morals, for rules of behaviour, that were entirely *separable* from the citizen, and concerned man only as man.

§ 8. I shall conclude this chapter by remarking on the strange influence exerted by this profound and mystic Pessimism on the most jubilant and naïve of the early Greek schools. It is of course easy to exaggerate the import of isolated figures, sayings, maxims; to overestimate the significance of particular tendencies, or rather of their striking characteristics. But we must not fail to chronicle the fact,—however it be interpreted as full of meaning, or dismissed as mere accident,—that Cyrenaicism (at first sight the simplest and most artless system of momentary enjoyment, scarcely binding together the fragmentary joys of sensuous life with a pretence of unity or singleness of aim) felt the fascination of the Infinite, the Nothingness, which Indian thought recommended as the haven of the wearied finite spirit. A closer survey will show us that the contrast, the paradox, is not so great as we suppose,—that there is a subtle affinity in the

pretensions of pleasure with an ecstatic love of Death; that a serious logical sequence underlies the transformation of the votary of bodily delights into the ascetic renunciator of conscious existence. Beneath the gaiety and wilful momentary doctrine of Aristippus, and his overt claims to dominate, rather than be led by, emotion, —lurks a profound distrust of man's capacity, a suspicion of the jealousy or indifference of outward Nature. "Only the present was ours; no one could call the past or future his own; the narrow strip between two yawning infinities,[1] the actual moment, was our heritage; over that alone we had power. The rest, no man could be assured of; what was gone could not be recalled, and no kind Providence guaranteed a continuance of enjoyment, which must be seized now or never."

§ 9. It is an obvious truism to say that the thought of Death intrudes far more constantly into the mind of the professional Hedonist than into the placid cogitations of the Idealistic philosopher. It was Plato, and no champion of sensuous delights, who divested this unwelcome necessity of its terrors; and taught men, in common probably with the Mysteries of Eleusis and the doctrine of Pythagoras, to regard Death as the liberation of all that was precious in us from an unworthy bondage, as the recall of the exile, as the entrance into "Life everlasting,"—the region of ideas and divine beings. For the man of pleasure, Death can bear no such lofty significance; with all this melancholy conviction of the aimlessness of human life, is combined a profound irritation at the stern necessity which bids him leave it for ever. Yet there is, too, a certain resemblance between the impersonal loss of self in love and wine, and the reposeful peace of the grave. Hymns to the kind terminator of existence have often been mingled with erotic or bacchic melodies; and

[1] This phrase I borrow from the Emperor Aurelius.

perhaps it is only natural, after the indignant protest at the transitoriness of things which youth always raises, that in the end this law is recognised as a merciful provision of Nature against inevitable tedium and disgust. The sole source of delight known to the voluptuary is exhausted; and it is to his old enemy that he turns for relief. There is a secret connexion between the self-forgetfulness, *unselfishness*, of human passion, and the final dissolution (as it appears) of the individual. The single life has no function and no mission; above all, no peculiar significance or intrinsic value. Ashamed of its own triviality, or irritated at the want of preparation for its comfort in a region where it is introduced unconsulted, it takes refuge in purely impersonal pleasures, in which the *self* is really abandoned, and thrown away as worthless, rather than cultivated and ennobled. The natural and final consequence of this *self-surrendering* policy, is that Death is hailed as a deliverer; not merely because the sensualist must preserve his untroubled gaiety to the end, and make a virtue of a necessity which he cannot avoid, but because in this unique event may lie the only pleasure he has not yet essayed,—the unexperimented luxury of a complete loss of consciousness,—to the momentary attainment of which all his thoughts and efforts have been directed throughout a wasted, because a purely unselfish and impersonal, life.

§ 10. Cyrenaicism starts from complete Sophistic negation,—from a doubt of the Cosmic Process, its inner constitution, its ulterior purpose or motive. It does not raise this *negation* of the comprehensibility of things into a *positive* doctrine of awestruck and emotional Pantheism: it refuses (and it has this merit) to bow down before the Unknowable and Unmeaning *as such*. It professes merely that "we can only know our sensations, not that which causes them"; an axiom of which, apparently, the world of society or the arrogance of human claims to omni-

science, needs to be constantly reminded. It recognises the limits of our power: only the pleasure of the immediate present (*μονόχρονος ἡδονή*) is truly held and possessed by us. It starts indeed from a certain youthful and sanguine belief that man can influence external things to his own advantage and convenience—

> Nunc in Aristippi furtim præcepta relabor
> Et *mihi res*, non me rebus *subjungere* conor;

but soon relinquishes this improbable hope; as indeed do all Schools of practical philosophy, whatever may be the peculiar impulse to speculation in each case. Certainly human happiness cannot be founded on the adaptation of Nature to our deserts; and one by one the outward props are abandoned, the realm of freedom is curtailed almost to the vanishing point, and all connexion of inward peace with the outer course of things is entirely denied. Aristippus, again, is inconsistent in his pretensions to sway things over which, in fact, he has no authority—like all who coldly and rationally compromise with lower instincts, and employ Reason only as the minister and the advocate of passion, the apologist of sensual enjoyment. The boasted control of Pleasure is in truth incompatible with losing oneself in the particular delight of the moment; and we may expect to find a modification of his doctrine, in later exponents, from the side of disenchantment, insecurity, and despondent Pessimism. Theodorus the Atheist substitutes, like Epicurus, for the tumultuous and fragmentary enjoyment of certain moments, *a lifelong temper*, a constant cheerfulness of disposition; and thus withdraws the inner life from reach of the darts of Fortune, and abandons, as unknown and unregulated, the world without. Not otherwise does the Christian system elevate peace (*εἰρήνη*) as the supreme and only sure cause of that happiness, which (it takes

for granted) everyone is seeking. Over events, crises, successes, failures of life, we exercise no dominion; only the temper, which attributes all to an overruling and merciful Providence, working for our good, can reconcile us to bear the manifold of existence without complaint. This is the significance of Christian Faith: a trustful confidence in the Unknown, not unsupported by historic evidence for God's interest in us; and resulting in a peaceful acquiescence in the Heavenly Will. Theodorus termed this disposition χαρά. But this advance in self-knowledge, past the successive and "atomic" moments of pleasurable enjoyment,—this unifying, comprehensive survey of life as a whole, of our entire nature,—is fatal to the Cyrenaic text; Anniceris, while still maintaining the ambiguous word ἡδονή, includes in its constituents all the nobler emotions,—love of friends, of parents, of fatherland. This determination to reach a domain of freedom, a realm of certainty, past the fragile body and its pains,—out of shot of Fortune's shafts, tyrants' threats, and vulgar ridicule,—will result in Stoicism: a complete rejection of things without, as in no sense *concerning* us. Or finally, in place of the lingering dissolution, the living death of the Stoic creed,—with its marble rigidity, its corpse-like passivity, its continual procrastination of the fatal yet so welcome moment of release,—we have this candid eulogy of suicide in Hegesias, the death counsellor (ὁ πεισιθάνατος); to whom life seemed intrinsically valueless—the desired end impossible of attainment—*positive* happiness a mere phantom chased by weary mortals. But the *negative* bliss of unbroken slumber might be ours, in the starless night of Death.[1] May not this phase, too, be due to that

[1] It must be noted, however, how little influence speculative belief exercises on behaviour. India, professing for thousands of years the same scorn of particular existence, the same contempt for the illusion of

fatal passionate craving for Oneness, which seems the inseparable attendant of Doubt?

the visible world, the same admiration for austere anchoritism, the same horror of physical generation, should by rights have become an unpeopled wilderness. But it is, in fact, one of the most thickly inhabited regions of the globe. Nor does Hegesias, in spite of his success in compelling others to death, seem himself to have hurried on the moment of his own fate. Arthur Schopenhauer was the father of an illegitimate child. But perhaps the lowest depths of pitiable inconsistency have been sounded by Hartmann, who, as if terrified at his bold defiance of the Cosmic process, crawls back to become the fawning advocate of its perpetuation,—the high priest of a pitiful reactionary Nature-worship, now coarse and vulgar, now whining and sentimental! What a fall for a once brave and zealous champion of the Truth! (though it be but one side of it). A Pessimist who holds up early and, if necessary, frequent marriages as the highest duty in life, who solemnly reproves young Germany for refusing this domestic bliss, and for preferring celibacy,—who plaintively inquires how else is the Fatherland to find sturdy citizens to fight against France,—is worthy of no more consideration than the Prince of Monaco accorded to M. Rabagas, after he had served his purpose.

Book Two

THE HELLENISTIC AGE

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND PROSPECT; THE SUBJECTIVE SCHOOLS, OR THE SAGE IN ISOLATION

CHAPTER III

THE SUBJECTIVE SCHOOLS, OR THE INDIVIDUAL IN ANTAGONISM TO THE UNIVERSAL PROCESS: THE ISOLATION OF THE SAGE; GRADUAL REJECTION OF THE STANDARD OF NATURE; NEGATIVITY OF ALL TERMS USED TO DENOTE THE CHIEF GOOD

§ 1. We are come to the last stage in the development of independent Greek Thought. Previous chapters have attempted to define, in each successive school of philosophy, the relation of the Part to the Whole,—of the Creature to the Creator, of the Individual to the Universal Life. In this particular and somewhat restricted study, much has been omitted that is of interest and importance in their speculations. Attention has been exclusively devoted to the various answers suggested to this semi-religious problem. For it is at this point that the results of cold and dispassionate *intellectual* ratiocination are indignantly disclaimed by the *moral* sense; and a compromise has to be effected between two distinct parts of the human soul, separate yet reconcilable. The whole temper of the School, its ethical and its logical doctrines, will be found to depend on the solution proposed; and it will be observed that Platonism, wherever it appears, marks the vigorous protest of the moral sense against its exclusion from its proper function,—the *guidance* of scientific search, and the *interpretation* of its results. Where the outward course of

things is not illumined and rendered intelligible by this act of Faith, mere eager curiosity in the development of Nature (viewed as an external, yet purposeless and unconscious Source of life) soon gives place to the negation of despair, to an ideal of impassible contempt. The soul of man, when fully mature and aware of its powers, claims its due place in the framework of the Universe, and will not be content until its mission is recognised, and its aspirations in some way satisfied in the existing order. We noted the dawn of this rebellious spirit, and we examined the justice of this demand. The instinctive suspicions of the individual, as he awakes from tutelage to the State, are for a time appeased by the naïve and trustful religious teaching of Socrates; the heroic attempt of Plato to "read in" purpose and finality (though in a vague sense) into the course of things; and the transient delight of the Aristotelian in the contemplation of Nature. But the consolation and the encouragement thence derived for the individual life now in the general disintegration of civic life, seem to depend entirely upon a single postulate,—the existence and the goodness of a supersensuous and transcendent Kingdom; and with the denial of this doctrine, a gloomy inactivity settled down upon the minds of practical men. When we speak of these schools as Individualistic, as Subjective,—we mean that, without really feeling secure of his own self-sufficingness, the reflecting man in this epoch finds no resource, no support anywhere but in himself, discovers no correspondence in the outer world with his hopes, needs, aspirations, and merits. Whatever may be the final term of these reflexions,—a rule of life of tempered sensuality, or a creed of magnificent professions of self-devotion,—the starting-point is invariably the same: "*the search for personal well-being*, frankly expressed and

exclusively pursued. It is important that the mists of a sentimental worship of abstractions to-day should not blind us to this fact: that, in the absence of any assured future recompense, any present encouragement, the sole duty of the individual is to come to terms with his meaningless environment; not in the interests of a visionary Idea which, as incomprehensible to him, can have no claims whatever upon his allegiance, but in order to secure for himself a moderate share of that peace of mind in which it was found all happiness consisted. We must accept an overt selfishness as the spring and motive in these practical schools which have yet to be briefly examined. To the actual needs of the single life, the once impersonal eagerness of scientific curiosity is now completely subordinate. There is also a sincere renunciation of all vain exploit and achievement: "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." The new Ideal is Immobility, Negation. We saw in the last chapter that this conception was by no means new in the history of Greek wisdom; but it is only now that this doctrine meets with universal acceptance.

§ 2. Alexander's transitory world-Empire had enlarged the mental horizon, without defining the obligations of the new cosmopolitanism; at best it resulted in an inactive and supine tolerance of the unfamiliar. In default of the old narrow sanctions of city-life,—an ideal Law, an All-wise Providence,—the sage was driven back upon himself for rules of life and practical behaviour in the small and ever-decreasing domain of Freedom which was still left to him. The founders of the Middle Academy, of the Stoic, Sceptic, and Epicurean Schools, are almost exact contemporaries; and as we saw in the case of Pyrrho, it is impossible not to recognise in their common tenets the influence of

political events. But a stage of complete insensibility to the outward world had not yet been reached. A certain explanation is vouchsafed of the much-debated relation of Subject and Object; but no longer with a view to satisfy the speculative interest. The lowest position is occupied by the *Sceptical* School, which denies the possibility of knowing whether the outer world corresponds or not to our impressions of it, or to the demands made by our moral nature. The *Epicurean* affirms boldly that it is not adapted to conformity with our wishes, though it accepts without reserve the evidence of its sensible messages.[1] The World is a purely accidental production, and has no higher significance;[2] and the earlier exponents of this Atomism are entirely free from that morbid reverence for Nature which intrudes itself in the later school: an unwarrantable deification of the Unknown,—additional evidence (if such were needed) that man is content with nothing short of Unity, however fictitious or arbitrary be the process of unification. The sole test of things to be sought and avoided, was pleasure and pain (but it was not clearly asserted if these criteria belonged to Soul or Body; and the Epicurean School wavers between a certain ascetic superiority and a slavish submission to sensuous appetite). The sole need of reflexion—of philosophy at all, of logic in particular—was to liberate man from the terrors of religion: from belief in a Providential government of the world. Here again appears that old and undying hatred directed against the Gods, as jealous and malignant beings, which recurs

[1] Οὐδ' ἐστὶ τὸ δυνάμενον αὐτὰς (τὰς αἰσθήσεις) διέλεγξαι . . . οὔτω γὰρ ἡ βεβαιοτάτη πίστις ἔσται.—EPICURUS.

[2] Nor did it seem to them (as to certain pseudo-ethical scientists at the present day) that man's peculiar duty was to *reverse* or *ameliorate* Nature, in perpetually struggling to enforce in the outward world an imaginary sanction which he felt within.

again and again in Greek speculation; and in virtue of which this so-called Atheism of Epicurus or Lucretius becomes almost justifiable: for it is a rebellion of the moral sense against an unworthy conception of the Divine. But man is not thus set free from grovelling fears and visionary hopes, to put his neck under the yoke of Fate. The Doctrine of Epicurus starts from the *value*[1] and the *liberty* of the individual; and he remains constant to his principles. Unlike Stoicism,—which only discovers the single life in order to pronounce sentence of its annihilation and absorption in the Universal,—Epicurus manfully continues his fight against Necessity, after he has exiled the Gods to the intermundial spaces. He would indeed prefer the old capricious deities of mythology to this new incalculable sovereign: *κρεῖττον ἦν, τῷ περὶ Θεῶν μύθῳ κατακολουθεῖν ἢ τῶν φυσικῶν Εἱμαρμένῃ δουλεύειν. ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἐλπίδα παραιτήσεως ὑπογράφει Θεῶν διὰ τιμῆς. ἡ δὲ ἀπαραίτητον ἔχει τὴν ἀναγκήν.* This freedom he preserved and secured, not by a feverish snatching at momentary excitement, but by a lifelong calm, an even temper in a well-balanced mind; by avoiding all disturbance, whether of fear or hope or desire. His reliance is not on *things*, but on his own inward *thoughts on things*. These he could change; over the other he had but slight control. He does not believe in Providence, a name to him implying a harsh, cruel, and inexplicable law, "careless of the single life,"—to him, as to all honest men, the only ultimate reality. Virtue was the surest of all possible means to happiness; and to Seneca, the Epicurean sage can appear as the type of contented simplicity, and his maxims worthy of incorporation into a Stoic Enchiridion.

[1] At least to *himself*, and this is obviously the only matter of consequence.

§ 3. Stoicism, permanently enthroned in the affection and admiration of posterity as the noblest development of antique wisdom, had far humbler beginnings. Zeno of Cittium, whose doctrine may be affiliated to that of Stilpo, of Crates, and of Polemo, is scarcely to be distinguished from a Cynic. Cleanthes was a dull though earnest man. The "indifference" of all actions —a disgraceful dogma afterwards tempered down into the maxim "that all sins are equal"—was, as we may surmise, a cardinal doctrine with these earlier masters. Chrysippus is the Camillus of the School. It is clear that the moral dignity of its professor at Rome, in the famous year 155 A.D., had no effect in saving Philosophy from the sentence of banishment; and it may fairly be asked whether Stoicism, as we are wont to picture it to ourselves, did not take its rise in the Eclecticism of Panætius of Rhodes, who tempered its earlier asperities and modified its shrill note of defiance; and also whether it was not first practised with success (as an *actual* rule of life, rather than as a *paradoxic* challenge to common opinion), when it was adopted, transformed, and ennobled by the adhesion of the anti-Imperialists of Republican Rome. The particular tenets of Stoicism in its later and flourishing days are so well known that I scarcely need to refer to them. I shall (not without some diffidence) accept them as representing the earlier views, and reconcile them with the Subjective tendency, then prevalent among all educated and reflecting men. If the Sceptic, in common with the speculative Academician, denied the validity of our impressions, *except for ourselves*; if the Epicurean used this doubt to pronounce definitely on the aimless and accidental character of our environment;—the Stoic (always famous for a resolute defence of unpopular notions, or of words which have lost their meaning) is

the strongest and most vehement champion of Providence in the world, as knowable and known to man. But this postulate of a moral order in things is indefensible. It arises simply from the needs of this isolated individual; but when discovered, satisfies none of his demands. It neither explains his position in the universe, nor tells him of his duty. It bears no affinity to any known end or design; cannot be judged by any human standard, and gives no sort of encouragement for action. The Stoic who cheerfully pronounces that the world was "made for man's use" (an obsolete superstitious conceit, which the Epicurean could combat with good show of reason), yet finds his only work in a passive resistance to the course of Nature, in renunciation of this so-called *rational* Universe. In ethics, a similar inconsistency intrudes itself into their dogmatism: for, welcoming greedily Polemo's maxim of a life agreeable to *Nature*, the Stoic accepted this without an adequate inquiry into the important question, *what* Nature? *whose* Nature? and in this reprehensible idleness or contempt of definition, he wavered perpetually between a superficial acquiescence in outward things, and ascetic concentration on one's own moral power of refusing them, the only liberty that remained to him; while in the end, this intense and bewildering problem,[1] which exercised all really earnest Stoic believers, will resolve itself into a semi-Gnostical division of things between Fortune and God. "Fortune governs the world of our environment, and is indifferent to us and to our welfare; nay, is herself uncontrolled for any higher purpose; but God dwells in a nobler temple, the purified and self-abnegating soul of the devout anchorite." God and Man are finally placed in an attitude of pure passivity

[1] "Whose nature? mine or the world's? Is deity more truly within me, or in the course of things outside?"

to the domains which they had been previously supposed to govern. Providence retires from an alien Universe, which, save in name only, has long passed beyond its control; and Man refuses to recognise the claims of his body, which he hands over, as it were, to the tender mercies of the Evil Principle.

§ 4. These three Schools, which have for their avowed object the *negative* freedom of the restless personality from all disturbance, recall with surprising exactness the triple development of the early Socratics. Pyrrho and Arcesilas correspond to Euclid of Megara; the Stoics to Antisthenes; Epicurus is but another Aristippus. Speculation may vary, and take now higher now lower flights; exact knowledge may increase, and the outlook on the world of phenomena become more fixed and steady when the mists of superstition are dispelled; but human nature remains precisely where it was,—the same at bottom, in spite of the fictitious advance or retrogression of Society, and the multiplication or diminution of the externals of civilized life. There are but a limited number of possible explanations of our nature and destiny; explanations suggested by individual temper, rather than by the admonition of instructors, or the influence of political surroundings, or indeed by the variable experience of life. Every man might then place himself in one or other of these three schools; and with the single yet important addition of the Judaistic hypothesis which I have next to encounter, these systems seem to exhaust all possible versions of the significance of human existence. The pure Intellect, impassioned only in its search for abstract unity,—in its discovery of a law which it seems to impose, but which in the end enslaves it,—sees through the illusion of the multiplex semblance around us, conscious that it can never penetrate into the inner core, the secret essence,

of this Reality (if real it be); the Moral sense, elevated in other natures to sublime heights of indignant virtue by vehement contrast to the degradation or bondage of ordinary men, finds, in the Will and its freedom of refusing the enticement of this phantasmagoria (*χρῆσις φαντασιῶν*), the only truly human and rational function; while a third class, and these avowedly the major part of mankind, endeavour to lull their reason and their moral sense into convenient slumber, and imitate the tranquil and untroubled enjoyment of Animal life. But it is clear that the Sceptic and the Stoic stand on the brink of the precipice. For the man who has exhausted (or believes that he has exhausted) the sum of possible knowledge, is like one who, after toilsome effort, has ascended a mountain, only to find a chasm yawning, a sheer descent into nothingness from the topmost peak. The gulf of Mysticism, as it were, invites the hardy speculator to its profound repose; and constrains and fascinates him, until he is overcome by dizziness, and falls, as if drawn by some irresistible influence, into the abyss. The worship of the Abstract and Infinite One—which denies or underrates the finite in the adoration of some inscrutable Moral Idea of Duty or inevitable Law—depreciates the individual and his peculiar characteristics, and despises the warmth and reality of life, the wholesome antagonism and interaction of opposites, the blessing of "diversities of gifts." A *typical* excellence is substituted for the development of *individual* faculties; and all joyful enthusiasm and spontaneous activity is banished by an oppressive and sterile Monism. The Epicurean is at least removed from the folly of worshipping the Unknown, the Unreal; he recognised no heavenly type, no ideal pattern; nothing is real for him but his own sensations; and, without actually regretting the accident which has

summoned him into the pains of self-consciousness, he determines to expose himself as little as possible to the perils of finite existence,—to place himself as far as possible out of reach of the shafts of Fortune. The common Pessimistic background to these systems appears clearly in their praise of Death as a release from the fever of personal life, their recommendation of suicide as a means of evading the despotic power of Fate, their love of negative ideas, and their dislike of all positive energy or enterprise in ordinary life.

§ 5. Thus the wise man remains isolated from all the rest of the world; shut up in the magic circle of his own sensations, which he cannot overstep. What he feels or thinks is produced by certain external or internal incognoscible causes: the fleeting and jostling atoms, or the Divine reason which prompts within. Bridge there is none to span the chasm between his feeling and reality, which always remains for him an unknown quantity. In all these systems, the same Scepticism appears: a denial of knowledge;[1] a return into Self; a resolute distrust of things without. The first rudiments of reflecting thought shattered for ever the old happy and Paradisaic harmony of Nature and Spirit, which, as the fanciful Classicist believes, was the original and enviable state of Greek youth. What is striking, is this immediate relapse into Melancholy (although often, as I am ready to admit, a merely speculative Pessimism); or into a positive defiance of the world-process, the Universal Order; for into these inner secrets man was said to be admitted, only by a pardonable and pietistic metaphor. For the resignation of the sage, springing immediately from selfish impulse towards calm and untroubled happiness, becomes a virtue of necessity: it is the

[1] Or an audacious assertion of the entire cognoscibility of things, which marks a fully developed Doubt.

mere self-interest, so conspicuous in Epictetus, of following quietly, instead of being dragged; passive obedience and non-resistance was so much easier than an ineffectual struggle. For what the sage did, really mattered only to himself; to Providence, which had no need of his co-operation, it made no difference at all: its obscure edicts and inscrutable counsels were always carried out, whether he assented or not.

> Ἡγοῦ δέ μ', ὦ Ζεῦ καὶ σύ γ' ἡ Πεπρωμένη
> Ὁποῖ ποθ' ὑμῖν εἰμὶ διατεταγμένος.
> ὡς ἕψομαι γ' ἄοκνος· ἢν δὲ μὴ θέλω
> κακὸς γενόμενος, οὐδὲν ἧττον ἕψομαι.

Distrust, retirement, nescience, passivity,—these are the text-words of Greek reflecting ethics. The world, as we have it presented to us, is a "vain show," a sort of Buddhistic phantasmagoric illusion, which should (so the Schools differ) either be seized like flying time for the immediate enjoyment of the Subject (for in every system, his pleasures and pains were the only final and intelligible term); or allowed to pass unheeded, like the appearances of some disordered nightmare, which the intelligence, still sober though suffering, has yet the power to despise, saying, "This is but a dream." The entire progress of Greek Thought, when at length it centres on the one thing of value,—the personal life, the self-conscious spirit,—tends towards a morbid Quietism, a complete disinterested passivity, or rather impassibility. Even in Plato and Aristotle (sane instructors compared to the rest) do we find traces of this peculiar strain. In both is the germ of Pessimism; in both is the same dualism of the Here and the There; the same admonition to "fly hence" with the wings of a dove (*ἐφ' ὅσον ἐνδέχεται ἀθανατίζειν*). The one rises upwards with love and admiration, deliberately blind to defects, when he

has once made up his mind to ignore them; by which method a certain not unreal unity and sympathy is attained. The other prefers an intellectual (and therefore *dualistic*) approximation, which never completely seizes the real being, the inner significance, of that which it pursues.

§ 6. Plato can indeed *qualify*, nay, transform, the whole tenor of his doctrine, that Matter is Evil, as Sceptics will do to the end of time, by an effort of Moral Freedom, which will recur in the Platonizing Stoics under the Roman Empire;—by a pietistic resignation to a Supreme Will, which, besides being Universal and inevitable, is also pronounced[1] *good*. To this attitude there is no objection; to such construction, clearly beyond the reach of argument, no reply; in themselves neutral, the facts can bear either interpretation, and the majority of men do not desire to be Pessimistic. Aristotle, contented and happy in his studies though he is, stands on the brink of the abyss, down which those of his followers must fall, in whom heart and moral sense overpower love of exact or mathematical truth. The Divine Providence is banished from our terrestrial region, and is permitted to exercise a distant authority in the orbits of the heavenly spheres, while Nature monopolizes all interest; that Nature which to the superstitious people, indeed to everyone but Aristotle himself, is the dark, unkind, mysterious, unknowable Ground of Necessity, against which the phantom of our freedom wastes its efforts in vain. Yet these immediate successors of the great masters are preserved from a lapse into the final distrustful passivity by a certain belief, more or less articulate, in Nature's accommodation to the needs of the sage; in the affinity (οἰκειότης) which united in a sympathetic band all sentient

[1] And I doubt not, by them also *experienced* so to be.

creatures.[1] They were not exiles in an alien world; nor did they lack a certain healthy curiosity in physical inquiries, and a delight in dialectical discussions for their own sake. Fortified by these interests, they are saved from the final step: denial of the value or significance of the single life, which is the secret motive in all varied ebullitions of the Pessimistic spirit. But so soon as the pleasing myth of man's wide relationship—Nature's kindly preparation for our reception and welcome here—had faded out of the creed of the philosopher, the sage retires from the really hostile domains of natural law, of social order, into the only abode of tranquillity, his inner indifference.

§ 7. This peculiar and Oriental passivity—Virtue, as the mere endurance of men's insults, Fortune's caprices—is thus the earliest and the latest phase of Greek reflecting Thought. The half-unconscious melancholy of the Ionic survey of this fleeting universe becomes articulate Scepticism in the Sophists; and after that period everything will depend on the subjective temperament of the philosopher. In the bright heyday of youthful emancipation from routine and tradition, the new-found liberty seems the well-spring of all joyfulness, which bids defiance to external constraint and authority, and resigns itself unreservedly, and with absolute confidence, to the guidance of its own eager impulse. With a naïve instinct, as yet unshaken by doubt, it reposes on the bosom of mother Nature, resolved though she might be by the more audacious into an aimless congeries of atoms, governed by Chance. There is no trace of Pessimistic gloom in the happy and prosperous teachers of youth,

[1] This fiction of an original peace is dismissed by Epicurus, who believes in an initial antagonism,—the struggle for life,—only *later* mitigated by good-natured indifference, by friendship in a limited circle, which is much less trouble than a universal hostility.

who, in their orderly and useful lives, gave the lie to their Nihilistic doctrines. But as the doctrine of *Ἀπρονοησία*[1] became generally accepted, sadness gradually settled down upon speculation. Socrates struggles against it with child-like trust and fervent piety. Plato opposes it by argument and enthusiasm,—yet recognises the inferiority of the lower world. Aristotle, definitely and for all subsequent time, divides the Universe into two unequal parts,—the abode of the Divine, and the home of Man, where the struggling impulses of Nature reigned, and not the immediate influence of God. A closer examination, then, of this visible world and the secession of the higher powers to the extreme confines of the Universe,—or even into the timeless and spaceless realms of pure imagination,—must of needs result in this distrust; not finding vent, perhaps, in idle lamentation or a joyless asceticism, but issuing in a more or less ironical cheerfulness which is based on a subjective strength of mind.

§ 8. Against this studied and disdainful Quietism, negative in its teaching and results, opposition arose from two very different quarters: the *common sense* of the political life, and the renewed devoutness of the Theosophist. The Stoic and the Epicurean—disguising their essential likeness under the appearance of violent enmity—believe in, and are satisfied with, this one present visible world, whether it is declared to be *providential* or the result of *accidental* impacts. But their ill-concealed dissatisfaction with its order and governance prompted others to return to a long-neglected province: the region of *Νοητά*, the secret treasures lying unnoticed in the human mind, which did at this time seem somewhat scantily furnished and

[1] Denial of Providence, the special care of a Divine Being for the Universe.

equipped. The failure of the pretensions of Cosmopolitanism, ending in a thorough distrust and contempt of the average man,—and the similar failure of the postulate of Providence, ending in secret indignation with a Nature that could no longer be deified,—leads men to seek refuge and consolation elsewhere: either in the extravagant possibilities of a Divine Communion, or in the sober pleasures and traditional convention and behaviour of Society.

§ 9. For these two[1] tendencies, seemingly so diverse, have at least this feature in common: they both start from the rejection of the Standard of Nature. When those later moralists speak of Nature, they mean our *human* nature, arrayed against the Universal Process, and rejoicing not in imitation, but in a perpetual antagonism. *Γνῶθι σεαυτὸν* is followed by *φύσει ζῆν συμφώνως*, to develop one's own nature in rational thought and moral resistance to exterior influences. The tiger, wolf, lion, were distinctly and consciously set over against man, as types of an *opposite* nature, very well in their way, and having a use in the world, yet no fit pattern for our imitation. It was their part to lacerate, torment, consume; just in the same way, it was man's peculiar duty to be faithful, modest, indulgent, self-denying. The maxim, "Follow Nature" (in spite of the doubt which enveloped it), was never taken to mean that, after a detailed inspection of processes and specimens outside, we were to reproduce in our own behaviour the lesson we learn in such studies. The purely Natural maxim,[2] for example, "Increase and multiply," was sedulously disregarded by the celibate sage. No, it was *his own* nature he was bound to develop; and it was on this

[1] The Mystic and the Positive, Neoplatonic and Socialist.

[2] Of which the once acute thinker, Hartmann, has become an apostle glowing with righteous indignation.

point that the vagueness of its content condemned him to inaction,—expectant, perhaps, of a heavenly illumination. But the axiom had, in truth, another possible sense. Besides being a command to follow the inward promptings of an (assumed) higher nature, it was a recognition of the "duty" (that is, the utility) of Passive Resignation to the course of things taken as a whole, and identified either with blind Necessity or with the Divine Will. Here was the widest generalization; and it interfered not at all with the former hypothesis: that man's true nature (and destiny) lay in a resolute refusal to be moved by the pleasures or pains which attacked him from outside. Against both these definitions,—this double significance of the notorious maxim, "*Follow Nature*,"—the New Philosophy of the Sceptical Socialist, the Christian reformer, the Antinomian Gnostic, and the devout Neoplatonist, will array itself. Nature, the starting-point of our investigation in the Hellenic age, has been pronounced unknowable, and rejected as a standard for human behaviour at the close of the Hellenistic.

Book Three

JUDAISM

CHAPTER I

ORIENTAL AND HELLENIC IDEAS CONTRASTED WITH JUDAISM (OR THE BELIEF IN THE *HISTORICAL* PROVIDENCE OF GOD, AND THE DENIAL OF *NATURE'S* INDEPENDENT LIFE)

CHAPTER I

PRACTICAL AND SPECULATIVE INFLUENCE OF HEBREW PHILOSOPHY AND REVELATION; REAPPEARANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE INTEREST IN MAN

§ 1. We have now to turn our eyes to the East, and examine the two new sources of influence, often concurrent, yet usually distinct, which at this time began to transfuse and transform Hellenic thought. It is well to emphasize the contrast at the outset; for Judaism is not Orientalism, and the discontent and indifference of Gnostical speculations have nothing in common with the terrestrial ideals and strict legality of the pious Hebrew. At present the two tendencies may seem to have many identical features; but after the lapse of some centuries we shall see the original incompatibility of their doctrine, in the difference of their results. It is not accurate to include Philo among the Orientalists, without a severe definition of his agreement and disagreement with what is popularly known as Oriental philosophy. And, in speaking of Judaism, we must surely mark off its *practical*, worldly interest in outward things—in an actual commonwealth, in a temporal development—from the vague, abstracted reveries of the Fakeer, whose only object is the anticipation in Time of an Eternal calm. We have seen the ideal of renunciation introducing itself, at least *theoretically*, into the "mirthful enjoyment" of the Hellenic race, in the first

moment of their reflecting thoughtfulness; and have noticed how early in their conscious meditation, voices might be heard summoning the lover of wisdom away from the illusion of sense into the One, the kingdom of reality. Now the tolerant Eclecticism of Philo is engaged in finding a compromise, a middle term, for the doctrines of Plato and of Moses. It is his duty to reconcile minor differences, and to show clearly the broad features of agreement. It may be that he abandons too much of the active interest in a nation's welfare (the sum and substance of Judaism) to an introspective analysis of the faculties of the Soul; and alters the entire standpoint of criticism by which the Old Testament was estimated; a volume containing the record of the Divine dealings with Man, both national and individual. But even granting that Philo sacrificed the glowing life of a moral and vigorous people to a worship of ideal forms, of contemplative study, of inaccessible abstractions, it by no means follows that in Philo the value of Judaistic influence was exhausted. The full and most direct influence of the Hebrew religion, uncontaminated by compromise with lethargic pagan thought, is to be seen in the Christian Church, the inheritor of all its treasures. For, against the doctrine of the world's eternity and permanent value, against a superstitious submission to the sublime and impersonal Source of Life, against the depreciation of man, the single life, and his practical endeavours in the sphere of moral activity,—this Church has always raised her voice in protest. The superficial admirer of the "Classical" epochs will regret that the graceful harmony with Nature was dispelled among Christians by an "Indo-Gnostic" sense of alienation and estrangement; that Hebrew influences entered to pervert, by grievous dogmas of man's sin and God's wrath, the pure sense of Divine Sonship; that Jewish asceticism and

distrust of matter violently interrupted our communion with our Mother, and bade us fly from hence, forsaking the society of our kind and the duty and enterprise of practical life. This is, however, a mistaken notion; it is Hellenic philosophy that is always unsocial and ascetic; and it is the influence of the Hebrew Faith that has kept alive the ideal of development and of progress, the standard of domestic and national life; *for the deities of the Greeks are Natural Divinities, but the Jehovah of the Hebrews is the God of History.*

§ 2. In this assurance of the *moral government of the World lay* the whole secret of this transforming and invigorating power, which Jewish and Christian teaching has without doubt exercised over rude or civilized society in the West. I do not, indeed, attribute to this *exclusive* authority our active and eagerly busy life, which contrasts so strikingly with the animal torpor and supineness of the slumbering nations of the East. Yet among all the obvious contributories to this modern zest,—the influence of climate, of racial peculiarity, of striking personalities,—this inspiriting doctrine is at the root of our development, and is, even from the point of view of social life, indispensable. It may be that we pride ourselves too much on what is termed progress, advance, and are unduly contemptuous of the stagnation which we discover in all other societies but our own. We should, indeed, find great difficulty in replying to the pertinent questions: "Advance of what? Progress whither? Improvement, by what standard? Education, of whom? Happiness and prosperity, where appreciated?" Yet in spite of our veneration for idle forms and purposeless turmoil (which we call the welfare of the State, the triumph of Liberty), it cannot be denied that to the impartial philosopher[1]

[1] Who sees in all this merely the instruments and apparatus for the development of *individual* powers, the guarantee of *individual* blessedness.

there are strong constraining reasons for a preference for Occidental ideals. This activity,—this eager and unrestful striving after the yet unattained, not the unattainable,—which so clearly marks our progressive European life, proceeds in no sense from our contentment with Nature, our supine or trustful acquiescence in her gifts or her faithfulness. We are engaged in a wholesome and truceless struggle. We seek to domineer over her, and not follow her suggestions; to wrest her secrets, not with a view of adoring the processes of life, the variety and yet uniform peace of phenomena, but solely with a view to adapt things external to our use and convenience. We are by no means content with a mere sufficiency. The Epicurean sage, with a cake of bread and a draught of water, may rival the bliss of Zeus himself; but the modern pioneer of this restless guerilla warfare is satisfied with nothing short of complete dominion. How permeated ancient thought was with this ill-founded pietistic awe, this superstitious dread of Nature! Always, to their eyes, a dark and inscrutable Being,—having a real immanent Soul, and animated, besides, in all her parts by hosts of incalculable and capricious spirits,—this notion oppressed with vague terror not only the Eastern anchorite, but the sceptic of the early Roman Empire! Investigation of natural phenomena was indeed a kind of worship, not to be undertaken with any impious hope of material gain, but solely in order that, understanding, we might reverence the more! But to us Nature is the mere indifferent sphere of our development and discipline; a quarry from which we may hew out our life, and triumph in obstacles overcome. We are no mystic votaries of cosmic emotion; we allow no sentimental thrill to pervade our souls at the sight of vast extension, of unerring sequence, of immutable and seemingly eternal stability.

Our conception of this unknown yet adaptable environment is sober and utilitarian. We are intent on Nature, indeed, but only because knowledge of her sequences can minister to our comfort, or satisfy our curiosity. Our true interest is transferred to a different sphere: the *historic* development of mankind, the fortunes of nations and individuals; the nobility of heroic deeds; our own single life and its significance in the eyes of God, whose Providence is shown, not indeed in *Nature*, but in *Revelation*. For Revelation assures us of His supreme sympathy with us, and overthrows all notions of the Divine function as consisting in an unceasing delight of self-contemplation, or the perpetual spectacle of a consummate World.

§ 3. From a human point of view, this practical and utilitarian conception of Nature, neither despising nor overrating her meaning, which neither sighs over her adamantine impenetrability, nor succumbs in sentimental ecstasy to her fascinations,—the temper, in a word, of wholesome European Society,—is begotten of the union of Roman and Jewish ideals. In them the instinctive unquestioning homage and respect paid to national life is never abandoned by a sudden and violent reaction against Civic sanctions; but the growth of the individual (as he gradually becomes the centre round which the once self-sufficing institutions dutifully group themselves), so far from producing a disintegration of the bonds of community, rather lends them reflected lustre, or provides them with a guarantee far more secure than before. *For that only which justifies itself to the self-conscious man, and refers its continuance to his commendation, is safe against the attacks of rebellious Egoism.* Not, indeed, that the Hebrew or the early Roman citizen was entirely penetrated by a sense of his own value, and saw in the State, rather than a constraining external

authority, a reflexion or an embodiment of his particular will; deriving its value for him, not from its power to compel, but from his own voluntary and spontaneous loyalty, his deliberate acceptance. But among the nations of antiquity, these certainly maintained a loftier view of private right, and recognised more readily individual claims. And this is perhaps the reason why these nations abound in (so-called) unselfish actions of enthusiastic devotion for the common good; whereas Greece was usually contented with unbounded profession of willingness to sacrifice present advantage if the call came, without any serious intentions of fulfilling the promise. The rudiments of the much-needed reconciliation of the claim of the *individual* with the *universal* (or common) Life, whether in a scheme of Theodicy or in the relation of citizen and State, thus appear in the polities of the Jew and the Roman. Yet it cannot be allowed that all problems were answered by these nations, or received their final solution. Many passages in the Old Testament strike us not so much with admiration of splendid self-denial, as with a cold surprise that the value of the personal was not more keenly appreciated. The language is so often rather of one who has not yet risen to self-consciousness,—who can exist and sympathize only in a turbulent, objective, catholic life,—than of the pure soul who deliberately, in a loving surrender, gives up what is to it *almost* most precious[1] for the good of

[1] *Almost*, I say advisedly; for even the Christian never sacrifices him*self*; only his *own*; the notion of *self*-sacrifice (as commonly accepted) being a pure fallacy. The believer, secure of Providence, personal immortality, and the approving eye of a merciful Judge, can cheerfully throw away all else. Unless he were thus assured of his own value in the sight of God, and of the usefulness of his momentary devotion for a Divine purpose, in which he himself will one day fully share, his self-surrender to the unknown would be both foolish and culpable.

others. This perfect blossom of humanity is the product of Christian influences alone.

§ 4. Among the Greeks, to whom the idea of Divinity is connected rather with *Nature* than with *History*, submission to the outward order was a mere enforced homage to the unknown; and a tentative dogma of the Stoics, that the World was created for the service of man, was contradicted by their practical refusal to make use of it, except by avoiding it. Among the Jews, the immediate certainty was by no means eternal and unchanging Law, far above the comprehension of the wisest, but the history of a favoured race, the gradual steps of a Divine Revelation so vouchsafed to man,—guarantee of the permanent worth, if not of man as *man*, at least of man as *Israelite*. In their Scriptural narrative we read of the successive moments of election, of separation, of careful choice of these repositaries of the Divine will and promises. From the multitude of the early man-like animals, described in the first chapter of Genesis,—living, like their fellows, by guidance of instinctive and unconscious impulse,—Adam is selected to receive the indwelling Spirit of God, is intrusted with a special mission. He is presented with a single help-meet, and the gift of freedom. God's attitude is not the impassive calm of a distant First Cause, delegating the work of creation to His ministers, but is the active interest of one who loves, beholds, and rejoices at the good, sorrows at the fall of man from innocence; repents that He has called into being these ungrateful children; is indignant and wrathful; and punishes with severity. Noah is the next inheritor of His favour, to the exclusion of the rest of the earlier tribes, who are now swept away. From him the earth is replenished, and his descendant Abraham is again called out of the midst of his people, into a special

communion with the Divine Being,—a privilege which yet entailed the irksome condition of perpetual vagrancy and exile,[1] in tantalizing view of a rich country, which was yet in a sense his own, destined to be the possession of his posterity. Henceforward, on the *national* life of this ever-multiplying race centres all the interest of the sacred narrative, and its pages recount instances of the loyal self-devotion of those who *vicariously* lived in it, rather than in themselves. Through all the vicissitudes and disappointments of this chequered history, one guiding principle is clearly seen: the Divine mercy, favour, judgment, penalty—all is absolutely comprehensible, and follows directly upon the merit or the crime of the universal Nation. When, *as a whole*, the Jewish people turn to God, He gives them deliverance from their enemies, and peace and plenty at home. Or again, when a wave of infidelity spreads over the land, and a desire for a less spiritual and *moral*, more *naturalistic*, worship takes hold of their minds, the punishment for this disloyalty to their Father is experienced by the whole nation. All alike, without any closer discrimination of individual merit or guilt, have a share in the recompense of national virtue, the retribution of national apostasy.

It is clear that no conception of the Divine Nature could be further from the ideal of the Greeks. That God should take *trouble*, should *labour*, in the work of creation or for the safety of a race,—should plead with man, rising up early and sending His prophets,—was inconceivable to those who viewed this earth either as one among infinite worlds, a single transient, rapidly passing manifestation of Life, which issues aimlessly in

[1] A renunciation of the present world for some certain, yet undefined, recompense beyond; and this is the very essence of Religious Faith, nay, of Religion itself.

eternal process (the Ionian doctrine); or as a sublimer spectacle, viewed with distant approbation by the Supreme, in its *total* perfection, not in its *partial* defects. But the *trouble* of God in the guidance of an ungrateful people is the perpetual theme of the Old Testament. An extraordinary change in the view of human life must ensue: it will have an altogether novel value and significance; and the ideal of man will no longer be an attempt to gain a *typical* excellence, to imitate God as an impassive spectator of the variety of existence or the harmony of the universe. The devout Israelite will rather recognise God's *purpose* in his nation, and will labour actively, heart and soul, to further the triumph of his country, and co-operate in the design of God. Though sacrificing his own comfort, indeed, to a law of Duty,—which spoke to him with authority from without, and could not yet be said to be "written in his heart,"—he bowed down to no abstraction, lost himself in no idle contemplation of the universe, but gave himself up, in obedience to a Living God, to promote the positive welfare of his own particular tribe.

§ 5. In this consists the distinction: in the consecration of the practical life, in the value attached to concrete realities, in the narrowing of a too-extended vista down to the simple needs of a small kingdom, the overwhelming responsibilities of the cosmopolitan to the duties of domestic life or "parochialism." The Jews were the reverse of cosmopolitan, in which comforting fallacy the Greek sages could defend, and even promulgate, their civic indifference. The Jew is untouched by the calculating egoism of the Sophists, which ironically overturns the sanctions of public and individual morality. He never becomes so keenly self-conscious as to set his own life, unnoticed and neglected by the course

of Nature, over against it in determined antithesis. If he does pass, in disenchantment and disappointment, beyond this anxious immersion in the present fortune of his race, into an *uncivic* frame of mind, it is to return to the patriarchal ideal of direct and blissful intercourse with God as a personal Comforter, never wholly lost even in the most earth-bound periods of the national life. This ideal calls the devout to no melancholy meditation on the unity and fatefulness of all things, but summons him, as a favoured guest, to enjoy that conviction that is at the root of all true heroism: the belief *that man is the free and indispensable agent of God's merciful and loving decrees.* Still, it would be too much to say that this (almost Christian) belief was *universally* accepted among the Jews. If it had been, we should find a far greater emphasis laid on personal immortality, the reward and fitting recompense for this faithful and laborious stewardship. Yet whether we consider the eager interest in the common welfare,—the *appropriation* by the single life of the fortunes of the whole,—or the devout prophetic communion with Jehovah, in which rare natures took refuge, nothing can be further from the Greek standards of philosophic behaviour. There is here no indifference, no apathy, no isolation, no mystic discontent with the burden of peculiar and separate life. If the prophet leaves the society of his fellow in the wilderness, it is to no impersonal musing, no meditation on abstract forms that he retires, but to talk with a Divine Comforter, Who, in spite of His inaccessible Holiness, is yet near and condescending to sinful men; Whose angels are always about our path. To the Jew, God's presence is everywhere; and His care descends to minute details of the life of Israel. Nature, the wonderful fabric of outward things, He has summoned from nothingness, and upholds every instance in complete

dependence, to provide a theatre for the destiny of man, in which the gradual perfection of the Chosen Race was the course of development; the Kingdom of God, the Coming of Messiah, the final consummation. The interests of such believers were no doubt narrow and intolerant; but they were vigorous and wholesome. It needed but a slight alteration of the doctrine to transfer all this interest from an abstraction, the Jewish State, to true reality, the Soul of man; to show that his happiness was the purpose and final aim of God in creation, and that His tender providence, far from being immersed in complacent spectacle of Nature and her obedient uniformity, or in the fortunes of a single earthly State, had in view rather an eternal and heavenly kingdom, existing for, and composed of, redeemed human souls: the Jewels of God, whose lustre gained by burnishing and affliction here, was not for *time*, but for *eternity*.

§ 6. Such was the contribution of the Hebrew people to the life of mankind in Western Europe; a revival of *practical* interest in a renewed energy, the conception of a visible Kingdom of God, existing indeed here, and battling against mundane powers, but perfected and realized only after the Judgment; the disappearance of that admiration for *Nature*, which prevented the due emphasis on Man's intrinsic worth and *historic* development. All will be found to depend, in the last resort, upon a firm belief in Providence, not merely *universal*, but *particular*; and just at this epoch doubly confirmed by a startling display of Divine Love, which need not here be more closely examined. I have now to speak of the opposite tendency: the alliance between Moses and Plato, effected by the Alexandrine Jews, by the writers of the Apocrypha, by Aristobulus and Philo. While the *material* and practical vigour of Judaism issued in the Christian Church, formed for the regeneration and

salvation of mankind,—leavening society through its influence on individual members, and teaching, *in the main*, that only in the moral intercourse of man with man in a definitely ordered State, could the highest development of the particular soul be consummated,—a *spiritual* modification of Secularism now takes place, under the power of the Sceptical Epoch, which we have just discussed: a tendency ending, as might be expected, not in strengthening civil society or reconciling the estranged individual to the common life, but in translating the Old Testament narrative into allegories of the phases of psychic existence, and confirming that cardinal doctrine of the sage's isolation by a certain perversion of Scripture; yet *filling up the vacancy of this meditative solitude by assurances of the Divine presence.* There can be no question that Philo is the link between earlier Platonic philosophy and the dogmatic and religious Platonism, which revives under the Roman Empire. With Greek wisdom he is perfectly acquainted; he employs all the technical phraseology of the Stoics, with whom he has much in common, and is bent upon discovering a connexion or an agreement between the Mosaic Law and the theories of Plato. He tempers the abstract Idealism which takes the place in the Greek mind of a direct and personal worship; he accepts the reality of Revelation, the final worth of the Law, the direct interest of God in Israel. He is indeed, to a certain degree, strengthened and encouraged by this *historic* sense of God's providence, of which I have spoken before. Yet he is chiefly known to us (such is the effect of compromise) as the inventor of the Λόγος doctrine, or rather the reconciler of its *religious* and *ethical* sense with the prevalent *naturalistic* hypothesis of Stoicism. Thus, while, from the *Hellenic* point of view, he fills the blank meditation and self-complacent solitude of the

Greek "wise man" with the Vision of God,—with a *moral*, not a *physical*, explanation of our affinity to Him, —from the *Hebrew* side, he banishes the real interested activity of Jehovah from the world's course, allows the true conception of the Divine Nature to evaporate in impersonal abstractions, as if he accepted the old benumbing belief that God could not Himself condescend to earthly existence; and, while preaching the delights of communion with Deity, he teaches that He could not be approached on the path of the *practical* life, but only by the road of *Knowledge*; or finally despairs even of this faculty of appreciation, and plunges into Mystic trance, the last refuge for the despair of the personal spirit before an *unknowable* Power.

§ 7. The whole aim of the Syncretistic Jews of Alexandria is to emphasize the *Transcendence* of the Divine Spirit. The *immanence* in Nature of all impulse and fertility required for the process of life was accepted by them, with certain reservations. But they did not agree with the Stoics, that this exhibition exhausted the Divine Nature, or fully expressed it: that there was no other world but this. There is a revival of the old Platonic and Aristotelian dogma so much neglected by the Individualist Schools,[1] that God had a life of His own, independent of the changefulness of this world. That mundane life, indeed, was His too, in a sense, as proceeding from Him, but He was much more. A stronger emphasis was laid on the *moral* relation between man and God; it seemed impiety to limit His power and essence to a mere *physical* process. But to the Stoic, the *Λόγος was* the Supreme God,—a bare underlying Unity at the root of things, moving out-

[1] Whose cosmology is in every case Heraclitean,—a modification of that doctrine which sees the One in the Many, but gives it no independent life above the manifold.

wards and inwards in aimless and spasmodic excitability. The Jew, confident in his *historical* record of Revelation, can correct and ennoble this view by the doctrine of a higher Divinity, above this World-Soul or the guiding Angel of human development.

Both these principles of *Natural* life (ποιητικὴ δύναμις) and of moral and *Historic* evolution (βασιλική) must yield to the supremacy of a higher Sovereign, Who unites and reconciles them. Neither the Stoic Λόγος, nor the Angel of the Old Testament Theophanies, is the highest Being—this pure, unapproachable God, on whom these religious enthusiasts lavish all the epithets of positive and negative theology. The development of the world of *natural* Creation and of *human* destiny were indeed under God's hand; but He was not exclusively occupied in this; and this ex-istence of His majesty by no means expressed His essence. And so we find at once in Philo, as well as in certain coeval Jewish sects, the great principle of Mediating Natures between the Highest and the lowest—perhaps the truest and most fundamental doctrine of Platonism.[1] There shall be no sudden break in the chain of existence. Fresh knowledge may indeed tell us of wider interests than the petty fortunes of Israel; of the immensity of the world, the splendour of heaven; above all, of the half-inspired utterances and devout lives of heathen sages. But the Jew must neither abandon his own paternal creed nor refuse to recognise divine dealings elsewhere on a larger scale. An open-minded tolerance, a little tired of a rigid and formal orthodoxy, and tending to a somewhat vague Idealism, will always revert with pleasure to the Platonic theory of Mediaries. The doctrine of Angels was a prominent feature among the Essenes and the Therapeutæ; and the whole work of Philo himself is an attempt to

[1] Though I hesitate a little to say, "of Plato."

universalize[1] the inner sense of Scripture, and to unite a belief in God's *transcendence* with the conviction of His influence and Providence in our world. The Λόγος, a Power second to God Himself, operates significantly enough not only in the realm of *Nature* (as Creator), but in the sphere of *History*. This half-personal sovereign (who takes the place of the hastily-deified usurper, Nature or Fortune) is attended by numerous satellites, who waver between the notion of conscious angels or unconscious Ideas. It is a restatement (but also a correction) of the theology of Plato,—the Idea of Good, the Ideas, the Demiurge, the Dæmons,—but cleansed, to a certain extent, of its impersonalism, its irony, and ambiguity, and, in spite of a compromise in favour of Hellenic abstractions, secretly confirmed and supported by a *national* (nay, a *personal*) confidence in the God of Israel. It is not necessary at this stage to set forth the Philonean doctrines more explicitly.

[1] That is, to give it a meaning for all devout men, by referring its sense, not to the fortune of particular Israelites, but to the catholic experience of the inward Spiritual life of good men, whatever be their race or time.

Book Four

THE ROMAN IMPERIAL AGE

CHAPTER I

THE AWAKENING OF SUBJECTIVITY: THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE MENTAL HORIZON

CHAPTER I

THE EMANCIPATION OF THE CITIZEN, AND THE THREE INTERPRETATIONS OF NATURE, AND MAN'S RELATION TO HER

It is now my purpose to review the chief movements in thought within the limits of the first five centuries of our era,—to note especially what theories of the Universe and its purpose then prevailed, and what place in them was attributed to man; and above all, what relation was supposed to exist between man, the citizen, and the body politic—between man, the single life, the cosmopolitan, and the wider city of the world. I will begin by certain axioms or facts, which are by no means pragmatic hypotheses assumed at the very outset of these studies, but conclusions arrived at after a long and (as I trust) impartial survey; although of certain predilections it is impossible to rid oneself (as, for example, a prejudice in favour of the Christian religion, as providing an ultimate solution to the problems of life). But I have not, consciously at least, misinterpreted facts, nor undervalued other systems, because I believe that this scheme supplied then, as now, the only true and only adequate answer to the legitimate demands of the human heart. There is no need to renew my apologies for the study of this period. The sterility of the classic era in Rome, with its naïve impulses and State-conscious morality, is followed by a phantastic efflorescence of all kinds of ideas and theories

under the Empire. No single one of the hypotheses then suggested to explain the problems of life, or to assuage its tedium, or satisfy its vacuity, is without some modern counterpart. We are forced to abandon the conception of an absolute human nature, and can study it only in relation and by the light of history. We owe, besides, almost the entire circumstance of our material or social life to the orderly development of Roman law and civilized society; to the Christian Church, and its ideals of life and behaviour. We are emphatically survivors, or rather inheritors, of the Roman Empire; which is, as it seems, the only world-power that has enjoyed an almost unbroken influence, after the moment of its dissolution, over the whole history of those who were supposed to have brought about its fall.

PART I.—THE AWAKENING OF THE INDIVIDUAL

§ 1. With this preface I pass on to the main results of a long interrogation of Roman Imperial literature. The first is obvious: the entire decay of interest in civic life and a distaste for social duties,—a tendency to subjective emotion, to self-analysis, a discovery of the value and dignity of the individual, and of the separate life which a free spirit could lead in a land of wonders, quite apart from the turmoil of domestic or political strife. There will be found, however, no real self-knowledge or comprehension of the Personal, and, save in rare cases, no satisfaction of its needs in the practical or speculative life; instead, a certain weariness of life, yet this by no means accompanied by a desire for annihilation, but transformed into an indescribable yearning for the invisible kingdom of the Ideal, into which access was to be gained either by the ennoblement or the sacrifice of the

personal consciousness. All these characteristics, again, may be summed up in a single phrase: the awakening of the Individual from a long dream (or somnambulism) of city life to the conscious possession of dormant faculties; hitherto, he had been but half himself. Such times as this it is the fashion to stigmatize as morbid, acutely self-conscious, romantic, decadent; and it is clear that the direct consequence of this underrating of sober and immediate duties, is the gradual extinction of a race or the dissolution of an empire. Yet it is foolish to attempt to avert the catastrophe, or to stem the irresistible current of disintegration. As the process of evolution, in the course of Nature, seems to be labouring towards the birth of man, a centre of consciousness, then for the first time particular and individual; so the supreme work of the State is to produce from herself sons who will disown their parent,[1] and find in an inner world with which *she* has no concern, a truer home and a more last-

[1] "The antidote to this abuse of formal government, is the influence of private character, the growth of the Individual; the appearance of the principal to supersede the proxy; the appearance of the wise man, of whom the existing Government is, it must be owned, but a shabby imitation. That which all things tend to educe,—which freedom, cultivation, intercourse, revolutions, go to form and deliver, in character,—that is the end of Nature, to reach unto this coronation of her King.

"*To educate the wise man, the State exists; and with the appearance of the wise man, the State expires.* The appearance of character makes the State unnecessary. The wise man is the State. He needs no army, port, or navy,—he loves men too well; no bribe, or feast, or palace, to draw friends to him; no vantage ground, no favourable circumstance. He needs no library, for he has not done thinking; no church, for he is a prophet; no Statute book, for he has the Law-giver; no money, for he is value; no road, for he is at home where he is; no experience, for the life of the Creator shoots through him, and looks from his eyes. He has no personal friends, for he who has the spell to draw the prayer and piety of all men unto him, need not husband and educate a few, to share with him a select and poetic life. His relation to men is angelic; his memory is myrrh to them; his presence, frankincense and flowers."—EMERSON, *Essay on Politics.*

ing rest. Admirers of the classic and objective ages of mankind, when the welfare of the *whole* is considered something apart from and above the happiness of the *individual*,—may indeed deplore this centrifugal tendency; but it is useless, in defiance of historic evidence, to deny that it is a necessary consequence of civic life;—which breeds in reflecting minds disgust with itself, which ceases to exercise sway over the emancipated, when the impulse to self-analysis, to seclusion, to sagedom, has once stirred the spirit of man.

§ 2. Complete immersion in social, patriotic, and secular pursuits is only a stage in the evolution of the perfect self-centred consciousness. So long as the pressing needs of daily food, the urgency of civic dangers (which menace the single life through the community), present themselves and call loudly for instant action,—man cannot become himself. He does not realize his freedom. But as he has leizure to meditate, to reflect, the conviction arises that his own life is something beyond the common existence, and is in a sense independent of it. The progress of philosophy tends to increase the feeling of isolation. With shallow characters who have outlived the unconscious morality of the State, but have not set themselves free from their own vulgar ambitions, this sense of solitariness becomes, as we saw in a previous chapter, Sophistic,—a means to selfish advancement, on the old paths of civic distinction, of avarice, or vanity, or sensuous delights. In the romantic and emotional nature of Plato, still retaining a generous impulse towards society, there is a compromise between the higher and the lower region, and the ideal sage becomes both mystic and missionary. The decorous wise man of Aristotle is contrasted only with his fellow in a consciousness of his superior merit, and lacks the elevating influence of an ideal. As yet the rift between specula-

tion and the State is incomplete; but in the succeeding schools of Individualism, as we have seen, the ultimate and the only reality is the *subjective consciousness*; manifesting itself in negative defiance of civil restrictions, of the darts of blind Fortune, and in contemptuous indifference to the laws of Nature. Man becomes a law to himself: according to his character or endowments, making the chief end of this new independent existence mere pleasure or mere austerity; the delight of indulging or of thwarting appetite; and as the brittleness of all external supports become more and more evident, there is a sort of consent among reflecting men, to place happiness in *impassibility*, that is, in freedom from all passion and tumult.

We are here far on the road to the Buddhistic Nirvana; it requires but a slight impulse to transform this resigned serenity into an absorbing religious yearning for Nothingness: a passionate desire to put off the burden of the *personal*, whose life was at variance with the obsolete restrictions of public duty, but whose attempt at a free and independent existence only led to a negative definition of the Chief Good, and a despair of attaining to it by any faculty as yet known to man.

§ 3. There lay two fundamental conceptions at the root of this depreciation of the Actual,—the Concrete,—and these appear to the student the inevitable result of long musing; the belief that the life of thought, of abstract speculation, is the truest aim of mortal man, and the goal of his highest development; and (in close relation to this) an attempt to realize, to objectify this ideal, in a veritable existence, a definite region, an attainable kingdom, the world of True Being. A negative process of Theology will come into favour, which thus forms the "desire

of mankind" into an abstract ideal, and deliberately abandons, when considering the Divine Nature, the notion of *particular* goodness or providence, supposing that moral excellence is subordinate to mathematical accuracy (that is, to Necessity), Benevolence to Truth. So thin and abstracted are the functions of this Pure Reason,—posited as the Source of all Being, active only in a perpetual revolution round itself, which is also rest,—that it requires no prophet to warn the worshipper that it will soon cease to possess even the attribute of Conscious Reason. But we have not yet reached this stage of inanition. It is difficult, nay, impossible, to say whether a current philosophical concept of the Divine, or a subjective analysis of his *own* nature, is first in prompting the sage to his conclusions. Man's knowledge of himself, and hope of God, act and counteract upon each other; but certain it is that the discovery of a personal chief good leads to a revival of the long-discarded language of worship; and "true philosophy" becomes again synonymous with "true religion." Zeal for the welfare of humanity now becomes superfluous; there can be no common ground between the earth-bound soul and the wise man mounting heavenward. The prevalent religion, degrading and superstitious though it may be, is not worth combating; for, after all, how could the vulgar comprehend the mysteries of the only real Being? All, then, is tolerated for the ignorant rabble; but the sage can have no communion with such worship, unless, perhaps, an esoteric allegorism take the foulness or cruelty of an orgiastic Nature-worship as symbolic of higher truth. But there is no real contact, and the divorce is complete between the life and aspirations of the sage and the pursuits of practical men of business or pleasure. The veil of an ample and indefinite Pantheism is thrown lightly over

the several divinities of the national mythology; the sturdy and interested anthropomorphism of the Hebrew Scriptures is toned down to suit the new conception of God as pure Truth in enjoyment of itself, or perhaps, wisest of all, God (like the sage who discovers, or, it may be, creates Him) is believed to have no concern whatever in the life of the World.

§ 4. If the end of man's life be Knowledge, gained by abstraction from the things of sense,—his true aim, absolute truth,—it is clear that an impassable chasm yawns between the ordinary mortal, unconscious (fortunately for him, it would seem) of the futility of secular interests, and the wise man, who has seen through the illusion. We are not now very far from the standpoint of the Brahmin, and the apparent devotion of the Stoic to visible Nature must not blind us to the striking resemblance which he bears to the ascetic of India. We must, however, qualify the supposed influence of such determined "Flight from the World." It existed as the principle of true action only in a few, but those the most highly educated; and although we take the writings of this period to show how widely dominant was a selfish subjectivity,—often grotesque and eccentric, often pure and devotional,—yet we must remember that there were two active influences at work counteracting this tendency of isolation, the Roman Empire and the Christian Church. In these flourish other ideals than that of knowledge (for the Stoic elevates a *passive* morality, which is not to be distinguished from knowledge). The ideal of a visible community, with equal laws and upright rulers, acting in defence of the weaker or oppressed, will still, for the great mass of mankind, seem a grander conception than a life of mute contemplation. The Roman Empire was the old city State, but far more majestic and worthy of respect, coloured with

all the indescribably fascinating hues of personality and individual caprice; and (spite of this) fulfilling far better than any governing society before or since, the duty of embracing several branches of mankind in a single State—of *controlling*, without *abolishing*, variety. The conscientiousness of this sway, and its disinterested acceptance of all the burdens of administration, was a perpetual marvel to the nations who lived under it, enjoying the semblance of civic life, the fiction of autonomy, but avoiding its responsibilities. A somewhat similar claim was put forth by the Christian Church: a universal empire of peace, to include all persons, even slaves, women, and children; a kingdom rather hoped for in a dim future than realized now, yet in a wonderful way (and in proving this they could but appeal to the blessed experience of the initiate) anticipated in the hearts of the true believers, in complete resignation and tranquillity. The sage had no message at all for the vulgar; to these the Empire and the Church addressed themselves entirely: the one democratic, and occupied in satisfying the carnal wants of an idle populace; the other, appealing to a universal instinct which at times presses impatiently beyond these material delights;—and also able, in an esoteric doctrine, to fulfil the yearnings of the educated as well.

§ 5. With this caution as to overrating the extent or influence of Subjectivism, I return to consider this phase more closely, convinced that—while the majority of mankind at that time sought refuge in some visible embodiment of order, and reverenced a "present Deity" in Cæsar or in Christ—the peculiar temper of individuals is best shown in surveying the single authors of genius, or at least of reflexion, which this age produced. Each one stands, to a certain extent, alone; erratic Individualism may find admirers, but seldom founds a school. At the

same time there are certain broad contrasts in the *object* of the yearnings of the self-conscious, which enable us to arrange them in definite groups. In the Roman poets, the search for a motive for life ended in a capricious sensualism, no longer blythesome,—as in the earlier golden age of free passion, and pleasures that left no sting of remorse,—but gloomy and despondent; as if the lover were the puppet and slave of some dread goddess, or necessity, some personal deity, whose delight it is to nurture and excite the passions, hopes, fears, regrets of men, and lure them to slavery and ruin. Personality wakes in him to a consciousness, but it is a consciousness that it is not free. The human spirit sets itself in opposition not only to the laws of Nature and Destiny, but to its own body; and hates, while it indulges or defends, its passion. "Apostles of Liberty" had to confess that there was no guarantee in life for the Individual and his freedom, and that in completion of desires lay no abiding satisfaction or peace. A *second* class, the Stoic writers, shake off the yoke of libertinage, without accepting the cares of domestic life. This phase of Individualism in the Roman Empire is the best known to-day, and hundreds read Seneca and Aurelius where one or two are acquainted with Numenius and Plotinus. But the value and permanence of its doctrine of self-abnegation has been much overrated; the influence of the School was comparatively slight; and its fame is due to a certain magnificent and theatrical posture of disdain or defiance, which refuses to argue save by paradox, and appeals to the convert to give up, not the lower portion, but the entirety of his nature. A *third* class, more definitely religious in tone (for the Stoic employs the old language of piety, but discards its meaning), seeks to find an asylum for the storm-tossed personality, not in sensuous delirium, nor in solitary despair, but in an ideal kingdom of

thought, approached by giving up the world of Sense, and living with pure thought in communion with a Divine nature, more or less personal. *Others* determine to make peace with the once discredited superstitions of the vulgar, and find relief in the sense of a divine protector or dæmon, to whom the single life is dear.

PART II.—THE WIDENING HORIZON: VARIOUS CONCEPTIONS OF NATURE

§ 6. But it is possible to represent the prevailing tendency of this period in another light. It may be called the return of the Individual to himself, or it may seem the lifting of the horizon, and the display of a wider, more comprehensive, unity above the cramped limits of the State, in Nature or in the Empire:—both are conceptions which include and embrace diverse and often discordant elements in a general scheme of peace and harmony. This unity is more distant from the Individual, and does not watch or spy so jealously over his actions and his leizure; obtains a more spontaneous homage, because it is not so restrictive or so near:—there is room here for the expansion of self, as well as for admiration (instead of distrust) of this vaster Whole. The order of this progress in the soul of a nation may be expressed thus: in a reaction against an objective restraint, the Individual becomes a law to himself, and, unable to live except in some form of polity, looks for a substitute, a city more ideal, with no stifling proximity, where civic duties were by no means the petty offices, and now unfashionable patriotism, of the smaller State, but might be represented as the practice of abstract virtue, or the acquisition of abstract knowledge. The Empire comes as a relief. There is at once something

given to men to reverence; but it is an Idea, which, just because it was universal (and so grandly comprehensive and indifferent to detail), allowed each man to do as he pleased:—to stay in his native town, and amuse himself with the now harmless game of annual magistracy; or to enter the military service, which now has the single and strange duty of keeping peace on the frontier, and not acquiring new territory; or to press to the capital, and display literary talent before a theatre of the whole civilized world. One by one the provinces become conscious of the responsibility of this leizure. Spain, beginning with the elder Seneca, is the earliest to appropriate the Latin tongue, occupying the whole first century with illustrious names. Africa succeeds, and holds the crown of rhetoric for 400 years, its muse expiring with Corippus, who sings the praise of an Isaurian peasant on the throne of Constantine, in verse that is still rhythmic and Latin. France comes forward, as mistress of panegyric eloquence, at the close of the third century;—while alongside of these sporadic developments runs the smooth and unbroken stream of the Greek Genius, which, culminating in the manifold perfection of the second century, overleaps the bounds of experience in the new Platonism of the third; then this at last allies itself with Christian Revelation, and gives its services to supporting, evolving, rationalizing, the new truth. Rome and Italy alone suffer from a kind of atrophy; after Juvenal and Tacitus there are no more strictly Roman writers in the Latin tongue. With this brief survey of the influence of the *Ideal of Political Unity* on the provinces, in the encouragement of letters, we pass to a more important point, the *influence of Nature.*

§ 7. For the more independent thinkers are not content with the Empire. Speculation, that had bent so strongly inwards, reacts outwards with equal emphasis:

for wonderful as is the newly-discovered realm within, it still lacks content; it is full only of vague and shadowy imaginings. As they came forth from their prison-house, the freedmen of Reason found themselves in immediate contact with the air of heaven, the light of the sun, the beauty and attractiveness of change and decay. Then arose the consciousness of unity among phenomena, underlying and ordering all the diversity of sense with a certain steadfastness. What was this Nature, this ultimate reality, and what were man's relations to it? There are two views, the Epicurean and the Stoic, much alike, and which may be termed immediate, dogmatic, and inexplicable. To the one, Nature was the Kingdom of Chance, its only law a sort of unconscious tenacity in a maintenance of type, in which the Individual Man—just risen, unhappily for his own comfort, above the unreflecting joy of the brute, a prey to disquieting passions and superstitious fears—could only hope to seize the fleeting hour and the simple pleasures of sense, insecure of the morrow, by restricting his mind from too discursive glances into the mysteries of existence, happy only if Fortune be kind. A similar though more dignified system elevates *Reason* instead of *Fortune* as sovereign of this present order of things, as the pervading cause of creation, most perfect in man, whose highest duty, and therefore supreme bliss, lay in resignation to the Universal, in abandonment of all personal selfishness and private wilfulness. So the Stoic maintains a decorous though despondent attitude to outward events, flocking in upon the sage, as he stands unmoved with bowed head, regarding these whirling eddies, in spite of his professed devotion to the law of Nature, as something disorderly in the universal harmony, or at least to him inexplicable. Neither of these, it is clear, can in any way *explain* or *justify* the dealings of this present order with the

individual soul; the reflecting Stoic or Epicurean found himself in worse plight than when he cheerfully submitted to the restraints of civic morality. The single life, now grown into self-centred maturity, found Nature indifferent to its welfare; it was completely disregarded. And so the vanity of things is the perpetual theme of the man of *pleasure* or the advocate of *reason.* Everything seemed to point to the depreciation of the actual life of practical effort and endeavour. The sole aim in existence was to harbour securely in some haven of rest, to repose in pure passivity, taking the delights, and expecting the dangers which a Supreme Power, out of all relation to the human mind, might choose to send. Their creed is identical; only the one starts with no presumptions, and lets Nature lead him by the hand unreflecting, wheresoever she please, and comes to believe that the animal life is the only true one, forgetfulness of self in cosmic emotion the highest goal of *ἀπάθεια*; the other, unable to divest himself entirely of the old prejudices of the moral sense, maintains ever on his tongue the phrases, Duty, Virtue, Common Good, Providence, the Catholic Reason, God as Father and Creator; but idealizes them past all meaning, and refers them to a distant abstraction which cannot enforce its own laws; nay, it is even unconscious of the prayers of its worshippers and the attacks of its enemies.

§ 8. Now, it may be laid down as an axiom, that however fervid may be the language of disinterested devotion, the protestations of altruistic sentiment, no system can survive in favour which does not reckon with the selfish incentive, the private motive,—which takes no notice of the existence of the single life, and refuses to justify itself to his sense of reasonableness. In the hypotheses of Epicurean or Stoic, the single life is unreal and unmeaning; it has no value and no import of itself at all. The course of Nature is not only unexplained,

it is rather deliberately pronounced to be indifferent to his feelings and wishes; both the *accidental* and the *providential* assumption end alike in *Pessimism.* It was the same, indeed, under the old civic regimen; but that at least kept man ever interested or amused—excited in the face of common peril, occupied with the solemn trifling of the common life; his sense of *personal* worth is not yet awake. But when once he is past this unreflecting stage of childish submission, his troubles begin. He "looked for someone to have pity on him," to *consider* him and his welfare, as well as to enforce the pitiless tyranny of Natural Laws. The Stoic in vain conceals his despair under a specious disguise of optimistic language. The Universal Process had no concern with him. It went on its path relentless, without respect of his hopes and fears: after raising in him a high sense of his own dignity and value, it mocked him by disclosing the hollowness of all such pretensions. The Gods of Epicurus were allowed to retain a titular supremacy,—a kind of ironical deference to public taste,—yet lived quite apart from the course of things and the turmoil of human life: *ἀταραξία* is the goal of God and man; practical life his bane. So too the Stoic, accepting all the language, and nearly all the legends, of popular mythology, in his heart of hearts derives no encouragement from this capricious yet warm and living personal relation to higher powers:—for these myths are but allegories or symbols of physical forces—blind, inconsiderate, yet unerring. Both systems study the Absolute, the Incomprehensible, *as such*, and try in vain to reduce it to order, and to justify to the reasonableness of reflecting man, to a natural sense of equity, an Unknown Power which refuses to recognise the existence or the value of man at all. The prevailing tone is a profound melancholy; for the personal cannot efface itself without regret; the theme of Death is the

perpetual ground bass of the light and gleeful upper notes of the poets of pleasure; to them it becomes a paramount duty, to overcome, to lull to slumber, the Reason and its unceasing, yet meaningless, call to practical life or moral endeavour.

> Pone merum et talos; pereant qui crastina curant;
> Mors aurem vellens, "Vivite," ait, "Venio."

While the Stoic, believing that in the exercise of Thought, or in passive resistance to outward impressions, a certain respite or solace might be found, did indeed exert his reason to inquire or to defy, but mistrusted secretly its boasted independence, and stood aloof, in the fictitious dignity of the cosmopolitan, from all earthly interests,—without hope either in Society or in the individuals which compose it. Stoicism, in its very nature, is excluded from the consolations of a belief in general progress and development. The universe is, *here* and *now*, what it always has been, always will be. Life, however long, has nothing new to place before our wearied eyes; the World-Process has nothing precious which it is laboriously evolving.

§ 9. The only satisfactory relation to Nature was a return to the old naïve unconsciousness of its existence; for it can be degraded into a mere department of the State, and as such looked upon as a ground for practical experiment, the sphere of the actual labours of the citizen in the intervals of his military duties:—Nature, the life-principle in things, regarded as a servant of the all-powerful abstraction of the City, instead of an independent and often hostile manifestation. This attitude assumes the sovereignty of the State, the result of the gradual development of Society; and does not begin from the relations of man, naked and unarmed, creeping on the breast of earth, or indeed from any speculative or

absolute theory at all; but from the facts of reality, and the usefulness of husbandry. It is a mere attempt to provide rules and systems for this manly and desirable occupation, and to ennoble the idea of Agriculture, in contrast to the fallacies and temptations of ambitious urban life. This is at least the object of the Empire in its desire to restore simplicity; and of the long list of practical writers on the dignity or the profit of cultivation of the soil. A comprehensive interdict lay on the development of other parts of Nature; and commerce and navigation seemed insults to the divine disposition, which had prudently separated the nations of the earth, and set them bounds which they should not pass. The audacious enterprises of the mariner, the merchant, or the miner, defied the laws of God. But on the cultivation of the field lay no such restriction; and this immunity is natural enough, inasmuch as a warlike State will encourage any occupation which does not disband its forces and scatter them to the winds of heaven, which renders a rapid levy possible, and which encourages the domestic virtues of temperance and thrift, and gave no approval to curious schemes of distant travel, or selfish engrossment in traffic. And as the State commended, the gods were allowed to preside over the conquest of the earth by man, as he tamed it to his uses. Paganism, however much it may tend towards a worship[1] of the forces of Nature, never made the mistake of Pantheism, in identifying the personal deities who superintended, and the material objects which formed, their several provinces. Indeed, Nature is always the dark unaccountable ground of existence on which gods, no less than men, play their capricious part, restrained within certain limits by the final sovereignty of Nemesis and Fate. But the gods had set the example of wresting

[1] Or rather towards a not too sanguine attempt at propitiation.

the treasures of earth from its keeping,—they are the patrons and the initiators of invention and discovery,—and the country teemed with placable dryads and spirits of glen and river, amenable to prayer, entreaty, propitiation.

§ 10. These several views of Nature and of men, of the *individual* and the *general life*, rise in natural stages of gradation. The *lowest* considers Nature, universal and particular, as the work of chance and coincidence, and is afraid of the unknown power. Although at first elevating the creed of active and enterprizing enjoyment of all that Fortune might cast in the way, yet this doctrine tends to substitute for this ideal, as quite impracticable, an attitude of passivity. In poetry, this Epicurean sentiment has two sides, the coarsely sensuous and the idyllic and romantic; of both we have abundant specimens in this age. *Next* comes the practical view, sober and utilitarian: a conception of Nature—so we saw just now—as the ground or field of discipline for the domestic and social virtues, and of sturdy manhood; and as this is not only a dream of past simplicity, but an ideal of life highly commended by the reaction of the Imperial system, we shall see a certain alliance in Virgil and Columella, of the practical and the poetic aspects. *Lastly* (although, for purposes of comparison, we have examined it together with the Epicurean system), there is the austere and theoretic contemplation of Nature as Divine, as mysterious, as insoluble,—which rejects as base or impious a utilitarian standpoint, and loses all sense of personality in either a rapt Bacchantic ecstasy of admiration (even of its cruelty), or a calm, resigned submission of self-will to the Universal Order. These three classes of early Imperial writers it will be our task to examine, each by itself, and to appreciate their different features. In these questions of seemingly mere *Natural* interpretation, it is

clear that all problems of theology lie involved; all surmises on the First Cause and Final Purpose of the world, explained more or less in accordance with reasonable expectation. Among the State-conscious, such questions of far-reaching import do not arise at all; the State being itself the ever-present unity, which accounts for and directs all hours of occupation or of leizure, and explaining everything in reference to itself, leaves no opening for the entrance of the fatal faculty of secret and unquiet meditation. But the citizen is no longer contented with the subordination of natural powers to the State, for he sees in them something of wider and more catholic authority, as yet unrealized. This religion (or rather religious emotion) is no longer controlled by set laws, in a department of the State; but depends on free selection, and concerns only the single consciousness, and the fertile, though mysterious, power which produced it. For such there exists no longer the mediation of an objective and civic worship, with colleges of augurs and pontiffs, with set sacrifices, and with stringent limitations on the personal fancy of the devotee. Religion becomes an "affair of the heart," and, instead of a political routine or grateful memories of family piety, is rather a matter of temperament, rising spontaneously from the degree of self-knowledge which each man attains. As described by the gross and selfish, there is the venerable and prolific feracity of Nature's generative process, which may be deified; for the sober admirers of social virtue, the gods of Nature must again submit to the laws of Rome; to the ascetic, God is the higher Reason, guiding for some inscrutable end the World-Process, which is in one sense His body, in another, an alien and antagonistic element.

§ 11. In any true religious feeling there are two stages, the finding and the losing of self; the conscious-

ness of particular individual life, in the sense, not indeed of complete freedom, but of entire dependence which ensues. There are two indispensable steps in the process: religious feeling must be self-conscious and at the same time resigned; it must be a freely chosen submission of the strong selfish impulse to a general law—of the *single* to the *universal* will. In short, man's freedom consists only in being able to select his master, or (with the Stoic doctrine) in choosing whether his obedience to immutable law shall be voluntary or compelled. If the only unity that keeps up a semblance of order amid the chaos of atoms be the continuance of Natural life, the passion and emotions of love become to the eager student the supreme reality,—not, as in civic moralism, a means to an end, in providing the State with new soldiers and citizens, but as an end in themselves: that is, the true self is found in yielding to the tyranny of the Blind God. This is the lesson of several Greek plays, which recommend mortals, not with Aristotle, *ἐφ' ὅσον ἐνδέχεται ἀθανατίζειν*, but to find their wisdom just in this deification of natural impulse, in rejection of high-flown austerity. Our middle class represents a conscious reaction against this perilous subjective Hedonism, masking itself under pretext of worship and resignation to the Divine Will. In the number of such opponents is Aristophanes, the Conservative, antagonist of all individual pretence or claim to a special theology unrecognised by the State. For such are in a combat and violent hostility to the two extremes, the sensualist or the mystic, and for the same reason; because these profess to reach of themselves a higher sanction than the State comprehends, and to obey an inner voice, or a divine message. But the Stoic (and, indeed, all Stoic tenets are closely allied to mysticism) reject as impious the identification of God and the generative process,

because it excuses the tossing of the soul in vagrancy and servitude to the manifold and transient, and the "breaking up," as it were, "into small change," to use the favourite Greek word for such analysis, a Principle, final, absolute, reasonable, which in its very nature must be one, indivisible, and intolerant of division. "The voluptuary," he would object, "interprets the Deity in terms of himself, and indeed in terms of his lower self; he recognises neither the freedom of the reason, nor the dignity of the ascetic life, which is no disgraceful slavery to the instincts of the moment, but a willing submission to an authoritative voice within. Its continual admonition to him is, Ἀπέχου, ἀνέχου: remember my presence in thy bosom; bear with the world, but refuse to enjoy it; take pleasure not in yielding to external things, but in keeping the divine principle unsullied within the sanctuary of thy heart." To the one, Free-will (the new idea of the awakened personality) consists in yielding to Nature; to the other, in submitting to a power above and yet within Nature, which tends more and more to free itself from this latter involution. To submit wholly in passivity to this power, is true reason and the end of rational life. It will be seen that neither estimate the true value of personality, nor are able to satisfy the legitimate demand for self-preservation. The ulterior verity is impersonal and incomprehensible. Self-finding is Self-loss.

§ 12. Now it will clearly appear (to resume the results of this introduction) that this epoch begins with throwing off the yoke of routine, with dismissing as obsolete all State-centred notions of duty; is heralded by a dawning sense of new impulses within the individual, Gracchus, Marius, Sulla, Cæsar; and aims at a complete emancipation from thraldom of all those latent desires, —romantic, religious, emotional,—which, for its own peace,

the State police must severely repress. The first result is a rejection of the claims of a particular State, and the glorification of the universal Empire, which, itself the creation of egoism, is hailed as supplying the needed leizure for self-analysis and introspection, for finding out new beauties in Nature, for indulging various tastes, whether sensuous or artistic, for bidding a mocking farewell to the old suspicious jealousy of civil interference. "Deus nobis hæc otia fecit." It was just leizure, a time for reflection, in which to unfold the treasures that lie concealed in personality, in the *man* as contrasted with the *citizen*, that the world demanded at that time; and this the Empire, even in its worst or feeblest state, was able to provide and guarantee. Just as each one let down the spiritual plummet into his inner nature, did the outer world shape itself before them. If man felt himself but a series of successive and often contradictory emotions, the movements of a marionnette, the world becomes a congeries of meaningless atoms, without beginning or purpose in their infinite transformation. If the individual, now armed with a conscious and positive reason, of deliberate choice returns to civil life, the cares of a family, and the fierce joys of litigation, Nature would again to him assume a subordinate place to the State, and the Divine in her would become a department of the Constitution, unquestioned indeed, but only because it was so written in the laws of Rome, like Tertullian's defence of certain ceremonial practices, "quia Deus præcepit." Lastly, the mystical Stoic temper arises; when, in presence of this vaster unity, the single soul feels awe and wonder, and a profound sense of creaturehood; when, by analogy of himself, and by lesson of weary wanderings in fastnesses of his own spiritual nature, he sees without, no mere prototype of an aimless existence, no department of civic administration, but a Universe guided by

the highest Reason (in a sense *within* Nature, in a sense *apart*), for a purpose unfathomable;—and on this he will insist with all the more warmth, as the difficulties in his solution become unsurmountable, the paradoxes irreconcilable. Thus, looking out for a new freedom, a scope for new-found faculties, arbitrary law or fictitious accident imposed an absolute restraint upon the caprice of the Individual. There was no real liberty of choice or action; no real independence of the personal spirit. There is, in its place, a semi-devotional abandonment of self to a Supreme Will, or to a law of change and decay (and this not without tears and idle complaints over the briefness of life);—indeed, the prudent course was to return from useless wanderings, in a wild and alien universe, to the safe harbour and tutelage of the city life. At least the first decided act of the recently liberated serf is to again decree his own servitude to his old master, or go in quest of a new lord.

Book Four

THE ROMAN IMPERIAL AGE

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTIONS OF THE PERFECT OR BLESSED LIFE; AS SHOWN IN CURRENT NOTIONS OF "HEAVEN"; THE KINGDOM OF GOD, IN OR ABOVE THE WORLD

CHAPTER II

IDEAL CONCEPTIONS UNDER THE ROMAN EMPIRE; THE NOTION OF *HEAVEN*

§ 1. We have traced the rebellion of self-will, finding a vent in nature or in theology which reflects the temper of the theologian, and its self-defeating result has not escaped us. It remains to consider the infiltration of Platonic ideas into Roman letters, and to pass to the East and estimate the importance of Orientalism in the development of the school, thus at last centring attention upon the main thesis of this part,—the common feature of Stoics or Platonists in the discovery of another world, of a higher order than this visible creation:—and wherever Platonism has been influential in thought, it has always meant a search for a new region, from which the notion of limit, of time and space, of all extension and qualification, is rigorously banished, but where *light* survives as the sole physical property, *goodness* as the sole spiritual attribute. What we find, then, in this age is a yearning for a new and unfettered life, in some place apart from care, where the true nature of man, his Reason, should find a joyful and unimpeded exercise; where the soul or spiritual part, purged from emotion, should dwell either in communion with abstract Truth, as glowing and lucid Platonic forms, or in contemplation of the opened secrets of the Universe,—in a word, for *Heaven*, the ideal home of man, which is the

object of his ardent longing, when he rises from the present and its perplexities or disappointments.

§ 2. Nothing is more common to-day than to hear ridicule of the concrete and material notions, in which people are wont to portray to themselves this future home and destined goal of their aspirations; and it is indeed currently supposed that this hope for some different state is merely a sign of the immortal value of discontent, and of an imperfectly realized ideal — a guarantee of the perfectibility of the human race. "What is ignorantly conceived of as some supersensuous and celestial paradise, in which each individual shall have satisfaction of his every desire, is in truth nothing more than the natural anticipation of the perfect state,—by no means existing apart in some ætherial region, or in the sun, or in some distant planet,—but, by the patient exertions of man here and now, fated to arise for our late posterity; a reign of peace, a Millennium of happiness, for the human race, in whom at last a perfect harmony of body and soul shall exist." Without delaying to criticize this view, which regards Nature and Humanity as the only ultimate realities, and prophesies their coming spiritual marriage, I would merely here point out how entirely inadequate is this promise to satisfy the demand for *personal* happiness, independent as it is of the progress of a race, the prosperity of a people. The wise man, the perfect human reason, makes no compromise with the State, will not be reconciled to Nature's fascinations. What he seeks is the purely *personal* delight of knowledge and the society of Truth. To this pursuit, the artificial restrictions or excitements of the State, the temptation of natural impulse, are alike serious obstacles. "The Individual either chases the phantom of immediate pleasure, or, taking a wider and more sober view of life, looks ahead to secure a lasting enjoyment,—peace with

himself, freedom from appetite,—and (a natural result) expects and demands the eternal continuance of an existence which depends in no way upon social or carnal support. No self-centred introspection leads to any real sympathy with the course of history, or the progress of civilized Society, or man's advancing mastery over Nature. The sage is by no means encouraged or consoled in believing that he is working (or rather being used as an instrument) for the advancement of a cause, in whose success he himself can in no way participate,—especially when the cause is the mere increase of bodily comfort, or of nominal and fictitious mental cultivation for a vulgar and slavish herd, the mere keeping alive of a host of illusions and prejudices. If to-day some men are content to labour painfully in this brief life, to secure a resting-place in the grateful memory of later ages, — the sage of the Imperial epoch preferred to survive rather by absorption into the great and inexhaustible reservoir of Life, whether conceived of as supreme Thought or creative Impulse. This is sufficient proof of the unreality of these altruistic sentiments. The man, to whom *knowledge* is the highest good, must never contaminate the purity of this ideal by an anxious interest in the course of History, nor must he condescend to persons or particulars.

§ 3. Besides the lack of interest in social progress, the peculiar character of the Empire prevented any anticipation of advance. As a system it seemed absolutely final. In the Imperial writers there is no trace of doubt as to its permanence. It is the ultimate and lasting form of government, the real return of the Golden Age, and the kingdom of Saturn. The effacement of the Republic, its gradual attenuation to a mere shadowy outline, was a matter of regret to certain narrow, shortsighted, or

morose pedants; to whom the opening of universal rights to all civilized races was as hateful as the catholicity of the Christian religion to the Judaizing opponents of St. Paul. Even to these, the re-establishment of a small, local, jealous, and incompetent oligarchy never really seemed practicable; nor perhaps to be desired; they delighted in lofty expressions of opposition and of negative disapproval, but had no constructive and alternate policy:—while, by the rest of the world, the recrudescence of petty feuds, and the disintegrating professions of restricted patriotism, were neither contemplated nor feared. In effect, the world had nothing left to desire under the beneficent dominion of Rome, and never anticipated a more perfect state of earthly things. Slavery [1] continued to account for, restrain, feed, amuse the lowest and most dependent classes of the population. There was at least no need to call in the aid of Social Surgery or Penal Settlements (the last and most startling proposals of the despairing champions of human perfectibility). Man was regarded as man, and not as citizen, and a certain code of universal and natural law grows up, "jus naturale," "jus gentium"; recognising the rights, the claims, of man upon Society, while perhaps unconsciously thrusting into the background the rights and claims which Society has upon man. Just because it had been divested of all its reality and prerogatives, Civic life, to a great extent, revives within the borders of the Empire, but perhaps as a pastime not wholly serious. Men played at it; it was not, indeed, any longer the sole end of life, nor was the exercise of petty magistracy the universal ambition of man, but it was one possible channel into which subjective impulse might be harmlessly diverted, and used

[1] Perhaps a necessity even among civilized peoples, whether boldly avowed as such or clearly disguised under more euphemistic titles.

for the common good, though grounded on a frank and conscious selfishness. While, then, the majority of unreflecting people are contented with the present life, and the enjoyment of such blessings as a stable and just Government can afford, there will be but little sighing after a future improvement (for no improvement seemed possible), nor indeed much regret for a readily forgotten past. But among those to whom a sense of independence brings a wider hope and wider responsibilities,—the genuine philosopher and the truly spiritually-minded man,—there will grow and increase, in spite of the protests of Lucretius, the expostulations of the Empire or of Nature, a hope and anticipation of a true home, of a City "eternal in the heavens." It is to this consideration of an ideal Realm that I here direct attention.

§ 4. Now, we notice at the outset, that the Roman mind cannot escape from the limits of the *visible* world. Heaven is a region not absolutely different from the present life; it is a part of the sensible creation; it is a mere matter of distance. They were incapable of that sublime and yet unsatisfying conception of Heaven which insists on its pure ideality, its spiritual transcendence; in which personal hopes are in truth laid aside, and there survives only the belief that it is a place of *light* invisible, and of *goodness* abstract. Either the Latin language is not flexible to express this; or the Roman mind cannot conceive such a vague idea. To the ordinary man of reflexion, *personal* bliss is incompatible with this doctrine, which teaches practical annihilation, or at least oblivion. Whatever the cause, certain it is that no Roman speculator ever pierces the "flaming walls" of the Stellar system, the visible creation; and in his most mystic reverie, heaven is used in its ordinary sense—the heaven above us, the area of blue space, in

which revolve in perfect harmony the sun, moon, and planets: on the extreme verge is peace and happiness and perfection, and in the centre lie settled the lees of the Universe, the evils inseparable from the good of the whole, the disorder which is a prevailing feature only of the small portion in which our present existence passes. To "Fly from the World" is to escape to the stars, and live on the outside of the revolving wheel—that which is stationary and at rest; below, is imperfection. To the region beneath the moon (since the edict of Aristotle) is banished all that is bad; above, is the heaven of light and goodness; and man was inspired, in the difficulties of this nether sphere, by the contemplation of the stars and their intricate yet orderly dance, in circling and never-ceasing movement, and by the thought of the final home of the perfected spirit on the confines of the World, where great souls are congregated. A strange sense of fascination attended this study: the doctrines of Astrology established not only a general connexion between the human race and the sky, but a particular association of certain stars and certain men, on whom their effluence had descended. The special providence of the old local or household gods was thus transferred to the supreme powers and rulers of Nature, the Constellations. There is less personal interest, and more fatalistic necessity; the new power cannot be propitiated. Nor is this cold Fatalism without its moments of mystic rapture. It has its enthusiastic prophet in Manilius, whose whole object seems to refute, with all the passion of Bruno or Vanini, the sceptical atomism of Lucretius, and reinstate in the affections of men, Nature, "Queen and parent of mortals"; and to point to her lieutenants or deputed satraps in the heavenly bodies, thus interposing a kind of *visible* mediary between the almost

unmeaning proclamation of Unity and the reflecting soul.[1]

§ 5. The Heaven, then, of Roman speculators—Cicero, Manilius, Lucan, Virgil, Seneca, Statius—is always the *astronomical* Heaven, the outer sphere of being, which on all sides surrounds the centre-spot of earth, and sends inevitable influence down. This idea of a personal affinity to these luminous bodies (whose offspring, indeed, man is) in some ways mitigates Stoic fatalism, which can thus attribute a certain freedom and certain permanence to the wise. It will be seen that the paradise of souls made perfect is local and definite; and is estimated by distance, being purely external, and by no means a *state* of mind, but rather a change of *place*. Against this strangely literal interpretation of the maxim, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth," Plato, it must be remembered, protests in the *Republic*. To him, reality was *spirit*; for Romans and Stoics, *matter* alone existed. The independent consciousness in Plato prompts him to form a wholly subjective idealistic notion of supreme bliss; a state somewhat akin to the "entrance into Life Everlasting" of modern mystical philosophy—devotional, yet not orthodox. It is not to be a future reward of some patient labour or suffering here; but an ever-present abiding sense of union with Reality: in the ocean of the single and self-existent Being, the tiny stream or ripple of the Personal, once separated for its sins, lost itself in a curious mingling, that was oblivious, yet full of joy. To Plato, Reality was Thought, and Thought and Being were one (just as Knowledge and Virtue were one); and Thought, after all, was impersonal; and Being, though nominally divisible and separate, was in truth one and inseparable. Now this truly mystical sense of

[1] To which pure Monotheism, pure Pantheism, or pure Socialism, will always appear incomprehensible (and if so, quite unjustifiable).

salvation,—the return of the prodigal to his father's home from the far country, where this high affinity had been almost forfeited in "vagrancy among the manifold,"—will appear again as a special type of Platonic Thought. Indeed, when we speak of the revival of Platonic influence in any age,—the fourth, the sixteenth, the nineteenth,—this is precisely what we mean by it;—not a renewed ebullition of a puzzling art of Sophistic Dialectics, as in some Mediæval school, but an overpowering conception of Unity, and of some scarce comprehensible ground of Being, to which the longing aspiration of the awakened soul ever tends, rising through images and figures and types of the sensible world to the perfect vision of Beauty beyond. Such mysticism was wholly alien to the Roman temperament, or the Stoic doctrine. To lose *self* in impersonal thought, light, beauty; this is the Plotinic heaven, and it can well be attained in this life as well as hereafter. But to rise into a scientific acquaintance with the causes of physical phenomena,—to sit, a disembodied spirit, upon the outer circle of the universe and understand the secrets of Nature's laboratory,—this, and nothing else, presented itself to the Stoic as the ideal of a future life in Heaven.

§ 6. Between these two views there is a wide gulf: to both, Knowledge is the supreme end; but to the Platonist, knowledge is a real unity, a complete transfusion and permeation of the individual with Truth, conceived of as Light and Goodness and Beauty; it is a strong emotion of the affections, a worship of the ideal; it is reached by Love, and has far more in common with an ardent affection than with cold intellectual appreciation. So it is that the Platonic Logic (the process of appropriating Truth) tends to leave the province of the understanding and the reason, and enters the domain of mystical Theology. A certain Quietism, an acquiescent

passivity, is significant: knowledge, like virtue, comes by some inspiration, is the gift of the higher powers, whose influence at once streams in upon us, if we are cleared of sordid aims, and our eyes opened to the light. True it is that the other side, the calm discussion or definition, is equally apparent in Plato; nor can it be said that his followers are unaware of the value of careful exactness and technical precision, or even of the stately advance of some purely verbal argument. But his sceptical attitude (which is the Socrates in him) leads him directly over into the mystical; "reasoning, the exercise of the understanding," he seems to say, "will lead you only into a negative quietude, an equilibrium, a doubt of all positive truth; to attain reality, the wise man needs some other organ of discovery: the temper of the lover, the poet, a sort of madness, which is alone true sanity and healthfulness of the spirit,—a certain affinity or identity, at some unknown point, with the Divine." Plato, then, has two sides, the sceptical and the mystic, but (as we repeat) it is by the latter that he has survived in the history of Thought. (For be it noticed that philosophies, in the end, have influence according to their practical guidance, their rule of life, their conception of the nature and the dignity of the thinking subject. It is precisely because Aristotle, the Empiric, refused to commit himself on these subjects of ultimate interest that he became the servant of a Church, which had pronounced finally and with supreme authority on all these points. To such he could accommodate himself; for genuine and sober Empiricism never pronounces on general principles, but only states facts, registers phenomena, and chronicles series. But Plato has spoken on the matter of religion, true blessedness, the nature of Heaven, with no uncertain voice; he does not readily adapt himself to a rival system. He will be regarded by the orthodox at all

times with a justifiable suspicion; and indeed it is not too much to say that a complete conciliation between Plato and Christian Truth can never be expected.) To return: these questions are not a matter of Knowledge, but of Faith and Hope; and modern thought comes round to the same opinion. Plato answers unfalteringly, ascends in a burning passion, a thirst after true being and true beauty; and receives, in a kind of trance, the heavenly illumination by a complete unity of the object of Thought with the thinking subject.

§ 7. But the knowledge of all empirical and scientific explorers into natural secrets (that is, the Stoical conception of Heaven) is in the process, and remains at the conclusion, absolutely *dualistic*. There is truly in such no explanation, only a formula of progressive or successive stages; there can be no real and satisfying *appropriation* of the discovery to oneself, one's own consciousness. It is, and remains ever, something external to oneself, in which one's true personality has no part, concern, or practical interest whatever. In a word, physical science can never explain nor justify the World-Process; it provides us with no idea, no theory (that is added by us, unconsciously translating the world in terms of oneself); and as, without doubt, the first impulse leading us to a contemplation of a Universe is not curiosity, but a desire to know the *Author* and *Purpose* of the World, it consummates its work, by a negation of its own completeness, when it announces that we cannot speak of Cause, nor of Origin, nor of Purpose at all. Science rightly excludes, then, all these (purely human) conceptions; and yet it starts from a desire to know them! There now arise (if the study of phenomena be made the end of life) three modes of explaining the facts so acquired; for be it well understood that no reflecting man can remain in positivist indifference (*ἀταραξία*). The idea that the course of

Nature, the Supreme Reason (which is, with some violence and arbitrariness, *read into* this visible process), is wholly incomprehensible to us, and, although controlling man with a law of absolute value and stringency, is in fact entirely unconcerned with him. This is the Stoic principle, the result of a Knowledge which is entirely dualistic, as discovered by men, whose temper, early training, political surroundings, predispose them to a certain nobility of life, to a resignation which disguises defiance. Wholly incomprehensible they will not pronounce it; indeed, their time is spent in assuring us of the *reasonableness* of the world, urged upon the hearer with all the more warmth because the earnest champion suspects throughout that he is but "defending a thesis." The Heaven of such men is no loving and ardent entrance into Truth's very self: there is the same wall of partition and the same impassable barrier between subjective inquiry and objective truth: their so-called Paradise is a mere continuance of those Natural Studies which, after the life of Virtue (a terminable discipline), forms their highest employment or relaxation even here. This immortality is not universal, nor is it eternal; it is confined only to those who have prepared themselves by an apprenticeship to Thaumas and Iris, and even the heroic soul cannot survive the conflagration, the "Ragnarok of the gods," when Zeus, the fiery horse, gains the mastery in the struggle of the four elements, and reduces the whole World-System to a single molten mass.

§ 8. The hollow character, the unnatural demands, of an *optimism* which leaves everything unexplained, and refuses to justify a single event by relating it to a comprehensible purpose, is well exposed by the violent reaction, which just about this time takes place, in favour of a *pessimistic* hypothesis. I mean the Gnostical Metaphysicians; for in this overt defiance of the Cause of

the World we have the secret foundation and root of all those mysterious and grotesque cosmogonies which, born from the illicit union of Indian, Egyptian, Hellenic, and Jewish ideas, overran the Roman Empire, as a protest against, or as an extension of, the Christian system. It is perfectly clear that a doctrine of the world which enlarges immediately upon the goodness, the wisdom, the providence of its unknown Author,[1] can only engender a profound sense of irritation in a subjective age. And yet so completely did the Imperial System minister to the material requirements of this life, that the majority of mankind appear on the surface contented, and inclined to act in obedience to Horatian maxims. But those rare and gifted individuals in whom the flame of early passion burnt strong,—in whom the *postulate* (for it was, and could be, nothing more) of a Perfect Universe aroused only fiercest outcries of defiance, and the control of a moral law or the load of bodily encumbrance seemed an insupportable constraint,—elevate, as the governing principle of the Universe, by an equally probable hypothesis, a jealous malignity, a *Δημιουργὸς* of evil, or at least restricted, powers—a devil who delights to torture men. The Dualistic Knowledge (which cannot *love*, because it can never *understand* nor appreciate the Universal Will) is ever capable of this *double* interpretation: the facts will bear either hypothesis; the evidence is almost equally balanced; the world has a *good* Creator or a *bad* one. Things of experience tolerate both solutions; they provide none themselves: in either case there is need of a *moral* act of freedom. Both Christianity and the various Gnostic speculations are a protest against the studied or fictitious optimism of the Stoics.

[1] Which can give no specimen of either, unless the most tremendous assumption be permitted, which finally appeals to the fact that it "*is so*" in order to prove that it "*is best so.*"

These refused to go behind or beyond the visible creation, and Heaven is to them a further unfolding of the unerring operation of physical Laws, the survey of a *physical* Universe, which, *as such*, can have no lesson and no encouragement for the *moral* life, on which the Stoic so much prided himself. The tempered pessimism of the Christian theory of the world attracted the Eastern ferocity of Simon, Menander, Basilides, Valentinus, Marcion; the dull burning defiance which challenged the whole existing order of things, as absolutely inexplicable to the reason of man, the individual. Midway there stands our own system, Christianity; between the extreme of an optimistic and a pessimist creed. It is founded upon a certain Dualism of principles; but pronounces with solemnity on the final value of the moral law, and of the moral life as the certain path to blessedness; of the visible creation as a means of trial and discipline. Now the Gnostic depreciates and rejects both the present Order of things and the law of Morals.

§ 9. It is not my purpose to dwell upon the moderate view of the difference of the *material* and the *spiritual*, which our faith contains: at least at present. I call attention to this fundamental idea which underlies all Gnosticism, with its *speculative* rejection of the Old Testament, and the *practical* depreciation of the moral life. A thorough inextinguishable discontent and impatience with the existing order of things, in State and in Nature, animates the Gnostics against all law, human or divine (in the Stoical sense of natural). Not that they by this summary judgment banished the divine in a restricted sense from the Universe. Rather, they pointed the way to the true home, the first origin and final abode of the elect: for the human spirit, at least in its higher and self-conscious development, is a spark of the

really Divine Being, fallen and entangled in the meshes of material life, and summoned out of this entire visible system into the Plenitude, the Heaven, of the Supreme Deity, where dwell blessed spirits, far above all contact with, or concern for, even the noblest part of our Universe. The more they dwelt in their musings upon the exceeding hatefulness or injustice of the world as they saw it, the more they were inclined to interpose fresh stages between a creation so bad and the true source of life. The redemptive message of Christ, who conquered the earthly powers, invited the elect to return from the dregs of an abortive Universe to the Transcendental Sphere, something absolutely beyond experience. The *pneumatic*, and perhaps the *psychic* as well, were entitled to partake of this Salvation. With the particular poetry and romance with which each successive teacher decked out this fundamental idea, it is not yet time to occupy oneself. These are details, fascinating yet confusing; and it is unprofitable to penetrate too early into this labyrinth, this bewildering account of original Simonianism, and subsequent grotesque addition or subtraction; and such discrimination or analysis is only useful when a full proof of the agreement of their main doctrine is established. But this main teaching is not the system of Æons, nor the reconciliation of Platonic Ideas with a vague and indistinct polytheism; not the troubles of Achamoth, nor the potency of Abraxas; not the 365 heavens and worlds of the Basilidians; not the mystic nuptials and impious sacraments of the Marcosians; not the hateful excesses of Carpocrates; not the communism of the youthful Epiphanius; not the naturalism of the Adamites, nor the paradoxic veneration of the various Ophitic and Naassene sects; not the particular point at which enters into a spiritual world the profane and abhorred mystery

of matter and restraint, "which doth still work." All these, the fanciful imagery of individual caprice, with which they embellished their discontent, must yield in importance to the *motive* which lies behind,—the conviction that this world is altogether bad, or wholly inferior to the true home of man in the fulness of the Divine Presence (of which, here, we enjoy but the very faintest reflexion); and that Christ summons the elect from an alien world—elect not by merit of action or deliberate choice, of moral or intellectual faculties, but by a spiritual necessity.

§ 10. The *negative* attitude to the World-System, apathetic and melancholy,[1] becomes in the fiercer nature of the Eastern Gnostics positive hatred and abhorrence. While the notion of a Universal Law or Divine Reason at first attracted the Stoic mind (though it afterwards failed to satisfy it, and hastened its later, and perhaps despairing, alliance with Mysticism), it was precisely this postulate, the law of Duty, and the reasonableness of visible creation, which repelled the Gnostic, and aroused him to defiance. For the elevation of Law[2]—the postulate of a Categorical Imperative—will prove to two classes of mind a mere irritant:—to one, immersed in the pursuit of sensuous well-being, to whom God is the arbitrary dispenser of such territorial and external happiness; and to one who, apart from the law, has already begun to act from free and voluntary choice. The stage of mere unquestioning acquiescence in the World-Process as good, the absolute deference to what is, after all, the preaching of outer Law,—the current social morality,—is

[1] In which ended the ethical or eudæmonistic speculations of Greek philosophy, and which, with more or less candour, was professed by all the later schools.

[2] As it is so ably exposed in Fichte's seventh lecture on the Doctrine of Religion.

too high for the one, as it is too low for the other. The true life cannot be found in the State, and the full realization of the hopes of man is confidently anticipated in some future Kingdom of God, or relegated in despair to some old myth of childhood, some long-lost Golden Age, destined never to return. The Gnostic at heart rudely rejects the idea that *morality* and *happiness* are in any way connected; and his final home bears no resemblance to the present finite life, nor its inexpressible delights to the grosser pleasures of earth.

§ 11. We have now to consider a widespread doctrine, which to a certain extent put the joy of Heaven more within reach, and looked forward to no distant fulfilment of promise in the advent of the visible Kingdom of God—I mean the Messianic longings of Judaism and the millenarian Christians. It is clear that the Jew was attracted by no dim vistas of beatific repose in the Pleroma. He lacked the mystical temperament, one feature of which is the yearning for a future condition entirely unlike the present, yet, in brief moments or long meditation, to be even here anticipated. His reign of Messiah was future indeed, yet concrete, actual, material, national. His hopes were for a visible Kingdom of God on earth, in a perfected community, surrounded by sensuous comforts, by the glories of foreign triumph, by the extirpation of foes and oppressors. It was to be, in full, a glorified earthly life in a prosperous society, local and severely restricted to the Chosen Race and their proselytes, sanctified or consecrate by a religious enthusiasm, which to some extent ennobled their *secular* desires. "As opposed to all *mystical* hopes, this reign of plenty was entirely outward, and concerned with the external equipment or apparatus of life, promised no individual immortality, but only an increased duration, an enhanced capacity, of enjoyment; and, again, looked forward to no

closer communion with the Divine Nature, hoped for no nearer access to a Father's presence. Now, it must be confessed that this expectation compares unfavourably, as an ideal, with the actually realized Empire of Rome: the one Kingdom founded on war and extermination, and confined within the narrow limits of Palestine; the other, deliberately pacific and universal, with a broad and ever-increasing basis of citizenship, admitting not only proselytes who submitted to a minute and rigorous law, but every nation, every individual, nay, every religion, on condition of accepting the Roman rule, with the sole proviso that no system but itself should lay claim to universality:—apart from this, all liberty of thought, and even of action, was freely conceded. Thus, independently of supernatural influences, Judaism, as a warlike Messianic Kingdom, was self-condemned to failure, as narrow, selfish, and ungenerous; and it will be noted how completely disillusioned of such an ideal were Philo and Josephus, the one finding the true kingdom of God within the soul, the true Messiah in the universal Reason, the other following the Herodians' example, and recognising, after a brave resistance, that Rome really supplied what Jerusalem merely anticipated, —a universal reign of peace under equal laws. The special value and dignity of separate races, of nationalities, was a theory exploded, too obsolete and old-fashioned for acceptance then; and the destruction of the Temple was a sign that the exclusiveness of a jealous Spartan reserve and hostility to strangers was by no means welcome to that age. Everything pointed the other way.

§ 12. Nor was the case different with those who recognised, indeed, the catholicity of the new Gospel, but still, in a certain perverse way, connected its promise with a visible and earthly reign of Christ. Vigilance

and hope are two cardinal and permanent Christian virtues, the attitude of the faithful servant watching for the sign of his master's coming. But this watchfulness, this hope, will take different meanings, passing insensibly from one to another, as time advances and the human race changes for the better or for the worse. The early believer looked joyfully forward to the immediate return of Christ, as inseparably bound up in *fact* with the fall of Jerusalem as it undeniably is in *idea*. (For it is only after the hopes centred in a visible and external sovereign have been shattered, that the Personal Saviour can take up His abode in the only true palace, the regenerate heart of man, conscious, indeed, of sin, but also of forgiveness.) St. Paul wavers between the necessity of enforcing this vigilance at that particular time and the duty of reminding believers that the Parousia might not be as immediate or speedy as they thought. Millenarian hopes, defeated at the fall of Jerusalem, at the close of the first century, or at the death of the last apostle, survived as a pious belief, and do indeed colour the eschatology of so great and accepted a Church-Father as Irenæus; but they have become glorified by distance and vague futurity, and spiritualized in deference to a truer conception of redemption and the real grounds of human happiness.

§ 13. It will be noticed that there is a close resemblance between the national pride or narrowness of the Jews and of the still surviving dogmatic republicanism of Rome. Both believe in the ultimate value of a petty civic life, in purely national Gods, in an aristocratic constitution, in a policy of conquest or repression. Tacitus deplores the lack of military energy in Tiberius; and Juvenal, the most vulgar of this type, regrets both the intrusion of Eastern worship and strange deities and the influence of the Greek culture and philosophy, its secret and insinuating power. Clearly this opposition,

wherever it appeared, either as the religious fanaticism of the Hebrew race or the secular conservatism of Roman republicans, was doomed, as a belated survival of narrow prejudice. Men entered into the laborious successes or disappointments of civic ambition and provincial magistracy, just because they could see through the illusion of finality; and could, amid trivial routine and ceremony, invigorate themselves by a thought of the Roman unity, in which each State maintained a kind of fictitious autonomy, like the Stoic sage, free amid the reign of Law. Men, again, were not prepared to find their ultimate duties so close at hand; they desired to expatiate in a wider field, and to look far ahead into the entire nature of the moral Sanction, the essence of the Divine Being, the well-spring of physical creativity. The Republicans of Rome had no followers; there came a time when the birthday of the murderers of Cæsar was no longer celebrated by the capacious flagon and antique vintage,—the harmless insolence of the Juvenalian circle.

§ 14. But the hopes of Judaism, ennobled by a religious instinct, and not wholly selfish, are eternal, and survive to-day. Nay, the very conception of a visible reign of God's vicegerent upon earth—the impossible though magnificent scheme of the Papal aggrandizement—borrows much of its spiritual side from Judaism, although it has the catholicity of the Empire as well. Nor is the religious expectation by any means extinct to-day. Many still see in the Church of Christ the destined mistress of the visible world, and bid her confine her attention within the limited horizon of immediate and pressing social wants. They believe that this world can be made *heaven* for the human race, mainly by her efforts or co-operation. They summon each man to a cheerful self-sacrifice and abandonment,

in the interests not indeed of an eternal and spiritual Kingdom of immortal spirits, but of a mere continuance of this successive actual life,—this "ever-recurring circle, this eternally repeated play, the monster swallowing itself only to bring itself forth anew":[1]—a mere permanence of mutability, which has by no means been proved to be needful or desirable, seeing that it is impossible to interpret or comprehend the meaningless and wearisome process.

§ 15. To conclude here the survey of the Ideal of Life Eternal prevalent in the early days of the Empire. The belated Republican, demanding nothing beyond the present, yet prevented by prejudice or fanaticism from enjoying actual blessings, for which he had not to toil, sighs for a civic independence on a narrow and exclusive scale,—and is signally disappointed. The Christian passes, at this period of transition, from a crude materialistic and instantaneous idea of the Second Advent to a more spiritual and personal conception of a distant Millennium; whilst among the higher natures heaven is "to be with Christ," which, though far better than tarrying in this earthly tabernacle, is nevertheless a prize to be won first by this apprenticeship—by the proper and loving use of earthly life and secular opportunities. They accept readily its distresses, temptations, sorrows, as occasions for well-doing or self-purgation; by which (if the true experience of each sanctified spirit were known) Heaven becomes ever present, and the union of the Divine and human natures in each man is a fact already realized. This sublime ideal of Christian existence is by no means found in a life of speculative knowledge and curiosity, nor in the entire abandonment of secular aims, but in the transfigurement of all such by an appropriation to self of the *motives*, and with them

[1] Fichte.

the *joys* of Eternal Life. The Gnostic repudiates all such compromise with the present, visible, actual world of Nature or Society; seeks to forget himself in abandoned rites or mysteries of esoteric doctrine; and, refusing the co-operation of the God of Justice and of the moral law displayed in the practical life, presses on, in inexhaustible discontent, from the present universe to a kingdom ineffably distant, where exists a light which is darkness, a god which is non-existent, a goodness which is blind and impersonal. Meantime the larger part of mankind are content with a secular life, assured peace, indolence, and comfort; even if they attain to a respectable self-conscious morality, as Seneca the Elder, Columella, Quintilian, they are satisfied with an outward civic sanction. While the last class, with whom I began this survey, the Roman Stoics, completely transforming the Greek paradoxes in a sober and earnest seriousness, not untinged with self-complacency, and conscious of dramatic effect,—do indeed profess to find an *ideal* world in the *real*: Reason absolutely permeating and transfused within visible things, and implicated inseparably therein,—yet (as we see in Cicero and his Platonic followers) they are forced to gratify the personal desire for a freer existence, the separate life of the soul; if it be but in a mere unproven trust and hope, and if it promise but a chilly survival of certain good spirits in the frozen and distant regions of the Stellar world.

Book Four

THE ROMAN IMPERIAL AGE

CHAPTER III

SEARCH FOR THE REALM OF FREEDOM; ENDING IN RENUNCIATION OF THE ACTUAL: THE ANTITHESIS OF THE TWO WORLDS OF BEING AND BECOMING IN GREEK PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER III

SEARCH FOR THE REALM OF FREEDOM

§ 1. FURTHER light will be thrown on the peculiar Self-will of this Imperial age, and its various impulsive efforts to attain repose, if the ebullition of personality be for a moment surveyed in yet another aspect,—as a Search for Freedom, the quest of the true scene of the exercise, the discipline, of human faculties. For this purpose, in its entire development ancient Greek philosophy must be surveyed anew from a *practical* point of view, not as a merely impassive inquiry into the facts and connexion of physical or mental life. It was, seemingly, in this spirit of curiosity that it began—an attempt from the side of the *one* or the *multiple* to explain, reduce to order, justify to the thinker, the eternal process of the world outside. What preconceptions there are, are mental, connected with abstract ideas and the world of impersonal thought. There is no sign among these earlier Eleatic or Ionian speculators that prejudice prevailed against the existing order (as in Oriental cosmogony); nor that they realized how far the *moral* rather than the *theoretic* problem pressed for solution. Naturally, with the assertion that Being is one, connects itself the notion of goodness, completeness, finality, independence, harmony, perfection; and from the more strictly scientific examination of *material* objects, and not of *thought*, arose in the opposite school a certain

sense of impermanence, futility,—the vain shadow or semblance of existence, which was a mere succession of stages, unconnected by any unifying principle. Over against each other in irreconcilable antithesis stood the world of Thought, of Being, and the world of Matter, or Becoming. (Plato occupied himself with the discovery of a common term, a Mediator between the invisible and the obvious, the Divine and the Natural; and he invented, as we have already seen, the doctrine of Ideas, which suggested that a conscious Intelligence, working for a purpose, was concealed behind the variations or the continuity or the permanence of type, which must not be overlooked in this world, although this characteristic of fluid transience be the more striking.) For the world of light and the realm of darkness in Zoroaster's doctrine have no connexion; each is indeed suddenly led into accidental knowledge of the co-existence of the other: thenceforward is uncompromising hostility between the two. The deductive speculator refuses to believe in the true being of anything besides his own *thought*; the scientific scrutinizer of *material* objects assigns validity to them alone, and professes his content in being himself a manifestation of their power, a mere phase of particles, just in this way composite for a short space, and with no other significance at all. The true Plenitude, dreamt of in the Gnostic visions, is separated by an impenetrable abyss from the nether region of sensible phenomena; Ialdabaoth is quite unaware of a Superior Power above, and is both surprised and chagrined when it reveals itself to him.

§ 2. Pantheism in all time lays down this initial and final puzzle of thinking men, as a self-evident proposition, as the fundamental axiom from which everything starts. There is one substance, and its attributes are Thought and Extension; and so, with an airy wave of

the hand, the actual is deified, and made eternal, and Time and Space explained. But it is perfectly clear that no system, whether of Spinoza or of Comte, which replies in this fashion to all our questions, can satisfy the inquirer. "It is so, because it is so." This reply is, like Mysticism, the last resort of hopeless philosophy, arbitrarily and against its own instincts pronouncing the paradoxic and everlasting union of Duality—or sometimes the youthful enthusiasm of a lover of Nature, who, with a superficial glance at this world, "sees that it is very good"; cannot believe that God or the Divine Ideal could have a better home than at the root of actual life as we know it; and, in fine, rejects the conception of Transcendent, for Immanent Deity. But except for these rare souls, elevated above the passions, the meanness, or perhaps insensible to the inconvenience, of everyday life, the problem still remains. The knot is cut rather than untied by the venturous speculator, who abandons the notion of creaturehood, proclaims the essential Deity of the thinking spirit, and refuses to believe in matter. On the other hand, no one seriously conducts his life as though a dominion over Nature, a certain independence, were quite impossible. And all speculation—as soon as, from an objective wonder or horror of phenomena, men rise to self-consciousness—tends more and more to seek to unite these worlds or antitheses from a *practical* and not from a *theoretical* point of view; and to inquire, what is my place in this world (explain it how you will)? What is the end of my existence? the purpose of my creation? and, above all, what, precisely, is the attitude I should assume to these two regions—material surroundings and pure thought? What, moreover, is God's attitude to the world which He animates and sustains, as man does his own body? Is the world of Thought separable, and

can it exist apart from the world of Matter? Is the soul immortal (in a proper sense)? Is God *above* as well as *within* the sensible world? Does the present order of things exhaust the infinite treasures of His creative intelligence? Here we arrive at once at those insoluble problems to which all philosophy, all reflection, however speciously cold and indifferent, will in the end be found to return—God and immortality, the cause of the world-process, and the value (if any) of human life. To these even the subtile negative inquisition of Kant comes back, perhaps half unwillingly, as to the ultimate impulse of all truly self-conscious thought; and certain of his supporters can at least plausibly maintain that his whole system labours only to establish the supreme importance of those propositions, and to point out the right road to arrive at their comprehension.

§ 3. In sum:—the entire aim of orthodox philosophy is to prove *the separability, the independence, of Thought*, —the existence and personality of God as conscious and beneficent Reason, and of man, in virtue of an *inherent*, not an *accidental* and temporary, prerogative. And it is clear from history, that where feeble answers have been given to this natural query of thinking man,—whether by Aristotle or the Stoics or Averroes, or, as in modern times, by an exaggerated emphasis on immanence and inseparability,—there is an immediate reaction against the verdict or Reason, a personality which pronounces only its own sentence of death: a reaction which looks angrily at the painful development of this useless faculty, and deplores its futility; which regrets the sylvan joys of an unreflecting and primitive barbarism, and envies the animals, who are tortured by no sense of past or present; and perhaps (with Goethe) pronounces for a deliberate return to a fictitious Hellenic blytheness,

the result of the perfect harmony of soul and body, the unconscious and beautiful health of "mens sana in corpore sano." To no avail! Once awaken consciousness, and the inquiring spirit cannot be sent to sleep either by the "eternal croon of Rome" or by the fallacious promises and material comforts of positivist philosophy, in which nothing is explained. Immediately sensible of a double law, that of the "mens" and the "corpus," and more and more convinced of the difficulty of reconciliation, man is yet disinclined to give up all hopes of a future and final harmony, or a possible freedom, a triumph of the better part. This, at least, is the aim of all practical philosophy which does not begin outrageously from the side of Matter. It seeks to set free the general notion from the limits of the concrete, which it animates, the type from the particular specimens, the universal intelligence from the single reason or the world-process, the human will (or consciousness of freedom) from the fascination and seduction of visible objects. (And be it noticed, that at least, in this last or purely *ethical* division, even those who start from the dark ground of matter try to retain a dull reflexion, an illogical survival, of the hopes and ideals of the opposite party.) Now it is clear that, this consciousness of inward freedom and eternity, this sense of inherent dignity, once attained, all reflecting men concentrate their attention more and more upon themselves, and the wonders of this particular being. The ultimate reality for all idealist speculators is the *personal* life, the single conscience, the separate reason: what is the value or the meaning in a world, which is *one* and *entire*, of this personality (be it truth or illusion)? Nothing is more instructive than to trace the gradual emancipation in ancient philosophy of this independent spirit, as it seeks—irritated and aroused by this obvious Dualism—for a realm of absolute free-

dom, and divests itself, one by one, of all the old ties that bind it to the restraints of actual practical life.

§ 4. Plato, like the Sophists, alive to the infinality of the State, bursts from civic thraldom, to find a new and inward sanction; but, with the generosity of an affectionate or poetic nature, he returns again to the life of Society, and will not allow the adept to become entirely engrossed in the Beatific Vision while his fellows are bewildered and wandering astray in the "valley of unrest." There is, in his perfect man,—whether depicted in Socrates or in the Guardian of the Ideal State,—a combination of the almost incompatible virtues of true self-knowledge and acute interest in others, such as we notice later in the Philonian portraiture of Moses. The early training, prejudices, associations of Hellene and Jew, are too strong to permit a perfect and absolute independence to the single life. The reflecting reason rises to the One in dialectic,—like the angels ascending on Jacob's ladder to the Divine Being,—but only that it may descend again, to order the things of this lower world in accordance with the "heavenly pattern seen in the Mount of God." (It is the peculiar characteristic of Platonism, that with all its professions and laments of exile, of abandonment, of fall, its longing to fly to the true home of the soul,—it still never loses contact with this actual life, can move in and direct society, and is always opposed to the blasphemous impeachment of the *beauty* or the *goodness* of the Creator in this visible sphere.) But the progress of disintegration in the tiny City-State, and the unfolding of a wider *Hellenistic* horizon,—a World-State of peace, culture, and toleration;—these influences operate, surely though insensibly, on the once patriotic temper of the Greeks. Aristotle is in reality more indifferent to the State and its duties or enthusiasm than Plato; and his successors

recede further still, leaving his position of scientific but not emotional interest, for one of thinly-veiled disgust. The Domain of Liberty was to be found neither in Nature nor in Society. In Plato there is something of the old passionate devotion to the Community remaining; but, it will be noted, it is no longer instinctive and immediate, but follows a conscious and distasteful effort: the true life of the individual, and his true realm of Freedom, being communion with abstract and eternal truths in the world of Ideas. But the coldness of intellect is, as a fact, tempered in his system by a large admixture of feeling and sentiment; and the wise man hurries from the heights of his meditation at the call of popular distress, and will to the State cheerfully sacrifice his leizure. With the tutor of Alexander the interest is first personal and scientific, the wise man contemplating with unconcerned accuracy the phases, the varieties, the history of States, as if their life was something quite different from his own. For his ideal is no longer a Knowledge which is more than half Passion, a divine unifying madness, in which the seeker and the sought merge into one; but is a Knowledge, to the very end, distinct from the object it cognizes,—tolerant, yet contemptuous and self-conscious.

§ 5. Aristotle's ideal life is the acquisition of personal knowledge, the attainment of untroubled calm, the satisfaction of curiosity,—a sublime form indeed, but still curiosity. But while he has passed out of the domain of the State, except for purposes of impartial scientific inquiry, he does not reject the co-operation of Nature. Indeed, he occupies a position midway between the unreflecting wonderer and the subjective philosopher; he represents only a period of transition. His wise man is largely dependent for his leizure, his peace, his freedom to follow his quest, upon an uncertain alliance with

Fortune. Indeed, he is at the mercy of circumstance; real freedom, in the sense of conscious independence of external support, he has scarcely attained. Even in the pursuit of an unsocial science, by which he will look down upon his fellow-men, he is in truth much beholden to the State, which secures his ease and protects his seclusion, dispensing with the more useful services which it might fairly require of him. So, in the other world of Nature, he demands an ample and a permanent equipment of the good things of life—health and wealth, without which the true life of happiness is imperfect or altogether imperilled. Such a solution of the great question of man's relation to the world, of his province of real *Freedom* and independent action, must needs be a temporary one. This superficial optimism, or rather trustfulness in good-Nature, cannot survive the first shock of calamity or reverse; and it is thus the main problem for succeeding schools, how to reconcile even this fragility and acknowledged dependence of man with the Blessed Life, which is presumed to be attainable,—how really to place the sage apart, free of his surroundings, to make his life perfect and complete in itself, immobile, passive, and undisturbed, beyond the turmoil of civic strife, beyond the dart of Fortune, whether aimed at life or health or property.

§ 6. It is for this reason that these schools assume such a paradoxic attitude to common practical thought, and are so strongly tinged with pessimism. For it is absolute distrust in life and Nature and the State, a perpetual sense of the near approach of death, an unreasoning terror of the unknown future, that lies at the bottom of the seeming complacence of the Epicurean. Still more is this manifest in the Stoic, who nevertheless does not (with Epicurean and Sceptic) return in conscious defeat, to popular standards of life, in despair

of truth or independence, but recedes still further from the vulgar notions, rejoicing in contradiction and defiance. The early Ionian disbelief in Nature, the Sophistic distrust and neglect of human generosity, return, strongly marked. An arbitrary edict goes forth from this school that all things are guided for the best, and a final Reason, pervading the Universe, receives divine honours, —a Reason which has nothing in common with human intelligence or human goodness. And in spite of this seeming submission and loyalty to a merciful Providence, —the apparent Monism or Pantheism of their system,— nothing can exceed their contempt of matter, their suspicions of natural laws, their defiance of Fortune: which things, after all, can be nothing else, according to their system, than the Will of God.

§ 7. Before I pass to the necessary sequel of this "intransigeance," the solution of this irreconcilable antithesis in a formally monistic creed, I would call attention to the return of the sage to the nether world, where he acquiesces, though still a superior person, in ordinary ideas, and mixes condescendingly with the common throng. This new alliance of the philosopher and the vulgar is a significant feature of the Roman age, and is due to the practical need, then widely felt, of finding a *modus vivendi* with the Cosmic Process—of accommodating to the surroundings of ordinary life the life of the sage, which could not otherwise maintain itself, which had failed to vindicate, or even to discover, a sphere of free unrestricted action. The behaviour of the sage in this particular class cannot be distinguished from that of the ordinary unreflecting citizen: he indulges in pleasure, but it is now from deliberate choice, not in concession to passionate instinct: he will conform to custom and even sacrifices to the gods, but only because it is imprudent to disregard popular prejudice, and the

negative result of a long quest of truth merely teaches the supreme wisdom of one course only—deference to public opinion. Pleasure, consciously snatched from the hand of unwilling Fortune, is followed by a regret not easy to be stifled; and the presence of evil or the advent of death is not soothed by the memory of all past delights; nor, again, can the vulgar see the need of study, if the result on life and practice be only the ratification of their own simple and obvious standard of behaviour. There is surely, then, no need of the long and laborious process of discovering the impossibility of Truth.

§ 8. The Epicurean and Sceptical temper enters deeply into the decadent children of Alexander's new world,—a dream of universal tolerance and peace, only realized later in the Roman Empire. It is the prevailing creed, except to those who take joy in domestic virtues; and its tenets, its doctrines, are so simple, so easily learned, so largely an avowed return to naturalism and instinct, that it has no need to found schools, to preach morals, to define a position, or reduce scattered opinions into harmonious systems. The Aristotle of this school is Sextus, with his scientific and technical disproof of certainty, and his refutation of all superior claims. "Return to earth, associate with the people whom you once despised; they are wiser in their generation than you." Its easy and popular expositor is Lucian. The entire exercise of Reason, condemned by the supposed futility of the long development of thought, finds passionate antagonists in the Cynics. These do not, indeed, return to the respectability of the middle-class Sceptic, guided by "opinion," and content to follow the tradition and customs of the place where, for the moment, he sojourns. Instead, they retire behind even the social life in community to a highly artificial and self-conscious naturalism, which often amuses, and

sometimes disgusts. The new Cynicism (however it be brought back to decency by Dion Chrysostom, or extolled and idealized by the Emperor Julian) has all the pride and isolation of the Stoic attitude, without its nobility and the strong interest of its intellectual background; and in attempting to deliberately follow a lower standard than the State supplies, it seeks to annihilate Reason, and to sink, by the very exercise of our highest human faculties, below the level of the brutes.

§ 9. Philosophic inquiry, however, and the attempted portrayal of the truly wise man, leads in the most famous schools of antiquity to the entire renunciation of the actual. Practical life is discredited, with its obligations and privileges; domestic virtues only enter into discussion as an episode; civic patriotism is indeed allowed, and to a certain extent[1] commended, but is never practised. And while the ordinary life of men under the Empire (as we see in the work of Petronius, or in the "Golden Ass" of Apuleius) goes on much as usual—in pleasure, in merchandise, in enterprise and adventure, and the enjoyments of literary pursuits; the most prominent figures on the stage are either preaching or acting a consummate Individualism, whether of a high or a low order. Plato retained, indeed, the warm affections, the heroic enthusiasm, the religious rapture of the lover, the citizen, the devotee, although he etherialized beyond recognition the objects of these emotions. Aristotle is an impassive spectator, though at the same time a restless inquirer: he curtails the more fervent impulses of the heart; he is a stranger to that side of our nature which is at once the weaker and the stronger; and while the knowledge of Plato is more than half personal affection and a sort of rapturous contemplation

[1] At least by Stoics.

above reason, the ideal of Aristotle is pure science, unbiassed by practical considerations, and free from preconception or passion. In the pursuit of this lies the true and exclusive dignity of man. It is the prerogative of the sage to rise above the petty interests and incidents of life, and live in a world of his own creation; but (let it be noticed) a world which is always "over against" the mind of the speculator in eternal antithesis, not a region into which he can enter, and become permeated and transfused by its influence, until his particular nature passes away into it, in absolute identity. This is the difference between the *scientific* and the *religious* consideration of the world: the cold and indifferent search for abstract truth, and the eager quest for a personal and intelligible relation. The former will give facts in abundance, but each set will to a certain degree neutralize the other: there is no advance, but rather progress in a circle; there is no sudden inflooding of light; there is no veritable and satisfying discovery of motive or reason; in a word, *no real explanation.* The temper of the Aristotelian is to remain content with this negative position; but the Platonist of all times and ages presses with impatience out of this sceptical equilibrium, finds or invents a new faculty to carry him to the world of his longing, and in madness, or ecstasy, or inspiration,—the abandonment for a time of personality, the mergence of the particular in a transport of devotion to the Absolute,—arrives at those heights which are beyond the attainment of the impassible student of impersonal truth, or the despairing and isolated sage of Stoicism, confronted with the eternal antithesis of the two realms of mind and matter, the eternal problem of life, Universal yet particular, and explaining the supreme mystery of personal existence only by denying it.

Book Four

THE ROMAN IMPERIAL AGE

CHAPTER IV

THE INHERENT DUALISM OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE (STOICISM) CONTRASTED WITH THE MONISM OF PIOUS EMOTION

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CHAPTER IV

THE SPHERE OF NATURE TRANSCENDED, AND AT THE SAME TIME RECONCILED TO THE SUBJECT IN THE REVIVED PLATONISM

§ 1. It was a matter of perpetual wonder among the Imperial Platonists, that school which once more admitted the play of the affections and emotions, to supply what was lacking in results of candid and impassive inquiry, —it was a matter of wonder that the message of Plato to his own age was so completely misunderstood. Plato, whose contribution to a cold and critical age of selfishness was just this warm heart, glowing with enthusiasm for an ideal holiness, and communing with a Divine Essence, into which it entered absolutely,—had been (so they fancied) degraded into a mere dialectical theorizer, an unimpassioned seeker for general terms, an inventor of a graduated scale of existence, rising upwards through mere mathematical abstractions to an ultimate unity: the idea of Good, of which "existence" could both be predicated and denied. To those who listened, with a purely critical appreciation, to the words of the great enemy of formal system, it was indeed easy to pass judgment on the inconsistency of detail, and to fail in discovering the entire aim of his teaching. Plato is above all things practical; that is, he approaches the difficulties of life with no open mind ready to receive the first impression of an outer world,

to be taught wholly from outside, but with strongest disposition in favour of a Divine Creator and Governor of the world, the immortality of the individual soul, the supreme attractiveness, as well as duty, of the moral life. It is not curiosity that prompts him to his work: it is a holy indignation against the perversion of man's highest faculty; it is a devotion to an ideal beauty, which at times flashes before his spiritual eye, and summons him to reproduce it, first in his own heart, and then, so far as may be, in the world of nature and society, as artist or statesman or poet; above all (and it is in this that he was incomprehensible to his own age), an unfailing love for a person, Socrates; regarded by him not with mere admiration for speculative acumen or dialectical sophistry, but with a strong affection for the entire character, faults and all, which leads him to bury his own name, and to centre all interest on his master. Pure science is not the Platonic ideal, any more than the Alexandrine γνῶσις means "acquaintance" with the Divine qualities and attributes. Plato does not, like Aristotle, seek to discover formulæ which will just cover the facts of experience so far as these are known. He does not instruct in detail; he desires "to create a new spirit," to awake a new faculty, and to teach man to exert, in relation to the world and his own actual life, the unifying principle of admiration, love, and hope.

§ 2. This, then, was the conclusion of the later age: that pure knowledge or scientific search *did not, and from its very nature could not, explain* the relation of man to the Universe. In spite of the adequacy of its technical language and the accuracy of its formulæ, it justified nothing to the *personal* intelligence, satisfying only *impersonal* truth; and left the single life, in dualism or antithesis, "over against" an incomprehensible Power, which was styled according to the temper of each specu-

lator—*good* with the Stoics, *bad* with the Gnostics. It could give him no help towards discovering the Realm of Freedom, the true sphere of Man's discipline; and, after all, the search for this is the only supreme motive which underlies and stimulates all philosophy. For it appears to be a fact well ascertained and obvious to the student of "human thought engaged on the highest problems," that, unless begun with certain definite prejudice, this search ends in negation and despair. The wise man of the later schools of Individualism is solitary in an alien world; for this kind of *impersonal* knowledge—that is, of impersonal truth—always preserves a barrier between the familiarity of subject and object. The restored Platonism of the Imperial age does, indeed, try to overleap this barrier, by regarding the Universe not as a manifestation of physical force, or indeed of mere Reason or assumed Law, but rather of Love; and thus, while starting from a position far more strictly ascetic than the Stoics,—while believing the creation of a visible universe to be in some sense an error or a degradation; the lapse of the immortal principle into the bodily tabernacle in a certain degree to be either a sin or its punishment,—it determines into a far more truly *monistic* contentment: seeks not so much to renounce as to transform and beautify actual life, and entertains for the rest of mankind, who are still unconverted to the beauty of Holiness, a feeling not of contempt or indignation, but of compassionate indulgence.

§ 3. The entire aim of post-Aristotelian thought had been to set the personal spirit *free* of all earthly encumbrance—to concentrate thought upon itself. But in proportion as this effort was successful, and the spirit released itself from all that was not germane to its true life, the realm of alien things loomed larger and larger, because ever more threatening and hostile. Such sacrifice

but enriched the power of the enemy, and impoverished the territory of the man,[1] struggling in a vain pretence of freedom against overwhelming odds. Man was taught to depend on nothing external, to be led by no outward circumstance; "the true happiness, misery, punishment, reward, was within; no human injustice could destroy the self-conscious tranquillity of the innocent sage, who in the depths of his own nature had found Blessedness (*ἀπάθεια, ἀταραξία, ἀνοχλησία*); nor could the evasion of earthly justice make the bad man happy, who of his own soul made a Hell wherein to abide." The "*inwardness*" of all that was valuable and precious in life was the profound discovery of the Individualist schools under the successors of Alexander. But the wise man, having rejected the association of the vulgar or the co-operation of material success,—having denied, too, the value of his bodily frame,—has no affinity and no relationship. Finding himself absolutely alone, the Epicurean reverts to the joys of friendship; the solitary Stoic professes the fullest communion with an Eternal Spirit, which, notwithstanding, does not deign to notice him. But the Platonist, starting from the failure of these doctrines to provide a real satisfaction (Platonism is always, in the first place, negative and sceptic), opens up a new region of Freedom, a new world of God and the Ideal.

[1] "How much of that which we had looked on as an essential part of our personality did we find to be the result of influences that cross, confirm, or resist one another within us! *Within narrower and narrower proportions shrank that in us which we could really call our own;* the bodily organs claimed one part as their contribution, another came under the general forces of psychic, which, by no merit of their own, work according to identical laws in all individuals; *one small sphere alone,* that which is ruled and shaped by the *freedom of our moral action,* seemed to afford an *asylum to our real self.*"—LOTZE's *Microcosmus,* bk. i. ch. i. p. 24. Trans. Clark.

§ 4. The gradual retirement of the sage from the world, actual, social, practical,—a necessary result of this quest for a domain of unfettered action,—has now reached its final stage. The process begins with emancipation from the bondage of the State, with a promise of a new and perfect affinity with Nature, or the World *as it is*. Mr. J. S. Mill points out how invariable, with the earlier schools, is the motto, *Vivere congruenter Naturæ*, that is, with the dictates of our own natures, *as if* in full harmony with the Nature of the Universe. It is "the constraint," men assert, "of a false civic morality, of public opinion, of tradition, that checks the exuberant richness of individual and spontaneous goodness. To get rid of outward control, and bask in the divine light of the sun as grateful children of Nature, our common mother—this is true happiness, a return to the condition of primitive and unquestioning bliss which our ancestors enjoyed in a better age." And, without doubt, to escape thus easily from our own thoughts, to enjoy the present, to repose in acquiescence on the kindliness of Nature and her ready accommodation to our requirements,—to throw cares aside, and to live in each moment pleasantly,—would indeed be, if successful, the solution of the problem which *practical* philosophy presents. But inevitable disillusionment follows: the vividly conscious striving after unconsciousness must be disappointed; and the eulogist of Nature and the mere *physical* processes of life is forced in the end to admit that Man has, in the depths of his being, an aspiration which can neither be satisfied nor silenced—for which Nature has no concern, no correspondence. He is thus driven, from his delusive dream of a perfect harmony, into an inner seclusion of his own heart, and this disturbed by his own gnawing and unrealized desires. There the Highest Good is not indeed health or comfort or knowledge (for all these are fickle and, in the end, impossible

of attainment), but mere freedom from passion and the feverish will—the Buddhistic "dying of the Will-to-live." The wise man was a prisoner in the State, an exile in the World; and Nature, whose methods and process he had called divine, was rather a step-mother, either actively malefic or blindly indifferent. For consolation, then, a man must pass beyond Nature, beyond the mere empiric and scientific standpoint, as, in spite of their travesty of devotional language, the Stoic is obliged to do; beyond, too, that fatal and dominant error (because the doctrine is both exclusive and unpractical), that the highest Blessedness is to be attained by Knowledge, or the investigation of phenomena, whether of thought or of the outer world. A new quality, a long dormant virtue, that of personal trust (no longer πίστις, but γνῶσις), had to be revived, though in a certain perverted form; the alliance of feeling and custom had to be called in; and Reason, pronounced incapable by itself of giving a message to men or providing a solace for their sadness, has to be guided by an ardent passion,—the worship of God not in the *actual* world, but in the ever unrealized *ideal*.

§ 5. The question for each man is no longer, What is my relation to the *State*? (and when once shaken, an unthinking love of country can never be revived); nor, again, What is my relation to *Nature*? (for this was found to have no profitable answer); but, What is my relation to the *Divine*? For fifteen centuries this will be the prevailing and absorbing study:—the Divine Nature, God and the world, God and the soul of man. (To this turns all the intelligence of man, all the devotion of the saint, all the inquiry of the philosopher, the disappointed ambition of the man of action, the secluded contemplation of the pious king. The monastery is a refuge against the storms of life, the sure haven of old age. If a cold and emotionless Aristotelianism be in the

ascendant, the science of the Divine will be formal, arid, and dialectical; if the warm influence of Platonism calls forth the *affection*, as well as convince or overmaster the *reason* of the worshipper, we shall have Mysticism, whether within or without the Catholic Church.) The sage, under the closing years of Alexander's epoch, found isolation painful, and sought some relationship which, if unattained here, must be looked for in a distant sphere. Absolute *αὐτάρκεια* we never do reach; we return to the old discredited interests of State, of fellow-men, of Nature-study, reinvesting them with fresh significance, and approaching them with the freedom of conscious and deliberate submission (for, to all *outward* seeming, there is no difference in the life of *πίστις* and *γνῶσις*: obedience to an outer and uncomprehended, or to an inner and intelligible, Law).

§ 6. So, while Sceptic and Epicurean crept back into a compromise with the common reason of mankind, and, in fact, rejected the absolute validity of *private* judgment, the formality of *Individual* knowledge, while yet maintaining the sole value and reality of *subjective* feeling,—while the Stoic school expired with the sunset splendour of a few celebrated names,—the revived Platonism, allying itself with un-Hellenic elements, in Judaism or Christianity, boldly seeks new regions of *Freedom*, a new affinity, in communion with the Divine, regarded either as a world or as a person (*τὸ θεῖον* or *ὁ Θεός*), as an idea or a will, as thought or moral energy. In the period of the profession of absolute self-sufficiency, the idea of God was eliminated altogether, or, by a subtle play of language, the old names concealed the relations and processes of Nature; or the only deities acknowledged were the "souls of just men made perfect." But now every other interest is postponed for the exciting and audacious voyage into the unknown land, with all its possibilities and fascinating dangers. The human spirit, bursting from the dungeon

of the visible world, and revolting against the Stoic divinization of the actual,[1] revels in dreams and fancies about this supernal region not far removed from Gnostical hallucinations, and finds there alone unfettered choice, a wide realm of freedom; there the fullest and most perfect exercise of what is *human* in our nature in the truest and highest sense.

§ 7. And now we shall see a definite answer is given to the old question of the earlier part of this book: Is the world of Thought separable? Does the soul survive in a realm of pure ideas? Is God the absolute being *above* as well as *within* the world? An affirmative reply to each of these queries formed the foundation of all Platonism. The soul precedes, both in dignity and in time, the material and composite body, which it from time to time condescends to animate; and as it precedes, and perhaps guides, its formation, so it survives its dissolution in a fuller and richer life, in some distant heaven, until, like Dion Chrysostom's picture of Zeus, *εὐθὺς ἐπόθησε τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς βίον* (Borysth. xxxvi.). The relation is merely temporary; and this present condition of the soul or vital principle is by no means its best or purest state, but, in some sense, a lapse from perfection. A new vista of possibilities for this disembodied spirit opened up to the gaze of the Transcendentalist. The soul was not a product of fortuitous concourse, a resultant harmony of a universal Reason, striking certain chords on the lyre of matter. It was bound to no such affinities; was tied to no such dependence; but rather

[1] Emerson, *The Sovereignty of Ethics*:—"When I talked to an ardent missionary, and pointed out to him that his creed found no support in my experience, he replied, 'It is not so in your experience, but is so in the other world.' I answered, 'Other world!' There is no other world. God is one and omnipresent; here or nowhere is the whole fact, the perpetual miracle which God works every moment in Nature, and ceaselessly imparts himself to the Mind.

had a life of its own in its true home, and, while living in this world, could yet reach in thought to the Ideas, commune with them, and enjoy an anticipation of eternity.[1]

§ 8. Here was the *Realm* of *Freedom*, so long sought in vain! The rest of mankind, on whom consciousness of their prerogative had not yet dawned, were fettered to false opinions, vagabonds in the dark realm of passion, avarice, ambition. The true nature of the Soul was to rise, above such entanglement, to the highest exercise of itself—reason and association with Divine Ideas. It ascended partly by correct definition, or a discernment of the general notion, the thought of God,—outplanted, *manifold*, yet *one*, in all the different species or forms of concrete existence, transient yet indestructible,—partly by devotional rapture, into the Presence of God. It had the double capacity of reasoning and of loving; which, combined, gave wings, and raised the ardent aspirant to the new yet eternal region. There was the scientific path, the discussion of the διπλῆ ἀμαθία; but this negative process was to be supplemented by the emotional, indescribable, and incommunicable ascent from the shattered fragments of false opinions into the domain of absolute Truth; from the wreck of disappointed and selfish hopes into the arms of an Almighty Father: ὅτε γὰρ μάλιστα ἔγνω τότε μάλιστα ἀπεγνω ἑαυτὸν, ἵνα τοῦ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν Ὄντος εἰς ἀκριβῆ γνῶσιν ἔλθῃ. (Philo, *Somn.* t. 10.) Thus the soul's real life is not here; neither, again, is this visible universe the only possible, the final, manifestation of Deity.

§ 9. The transcendence of the Divine Being, of the

[1] Apuleius, *de dogm. Plat.* ii. 20:—"Eum qui per hæc profectus fidenti et securo gradu virtutis via graderetur, adeptum solidam vivendi rationem, repente fieri perfectum; hoc est repente præteriti futurique ævi ultimas partes attingere, et esse quodammodo intemporalem."

human soul, the veritable existence of an independent and supra-natural region—this is the peculiar contribution of Platonism. The present state of things is neither wholly *good*, as in the flat and improbable statement of Stoic optimists; nor is it wholly *bad*, a dungeon,[1] an exile, a captivity, as the Gnostics replied, in defiance of the devout contentment of their rivals. Descent into this World of Appearance might be a fall from a more perfect state of Being; but it did not therefore follow that this material creation had no beauties and no significance, this earthly life no value, the rules of duty no obligation. Much, indeed, depended upon a proper use of the present; and in the discipline of temperance and justice the future state of the soul was determined. There is thus no such violent reaction against this World as we see in the Gnostics. The new Platonic School is a mediator between these two extremes, an unconscious attempt at reconciliation and correction of Stoic and Gnostic hypotheses. The Asclepian Dialogue (translated by Apuleius) gives the keynote of all Platonic ethics. There is a higher and a lower, not a bad and a good; the universe is graduated in scale, and revelation of the Divine is proportionate to the receiver's power:—"here we have to guide the terrestrial spheres, and keep unspotted from its temptations, while we do not shirk its duties, remembering that we have a better city."

[1] For these half-Gnostical conceptions of discontent and abhorrence of the present,—and which I cannot help associating with the old and perhaps esoteric belief that the Gods are the natural enemies, Prometheus the creator and benefactor, of the human race,—see the story told by the young Charidemus (Dion Chrysostom, xxx.), "a story neither pleasant nor agreeable . . . but which has a certain attraction": ὅτι τοῦ τῶν Τιτάνων αἵματός ἐσμεν ἅπαντες οἱ ἄνθρωποι, . . . οὐδὲ . . (θεοῖς) φιλοὶ ἐσμὲν, ἀλλὰ κολαζόμεθά τε ὑπ' αὐτῶν κ. ἐπὶ τιμωρίᾳ γεγόναμεν, ἐν φρουρᾷ δὴ ὄντες ἐν τῷ βίῳ τοσοῦτον χρόνον ὅσον ἕκαστοι ζῶμεν. "Those whom the Gods love, die young," that is, their sentence is lighter.

§ 10. And so, as was said in Theology, neither the visible world nor the Mosaic Covenant finally discloses the whole nature of God—does not exhaust the infinite possibilities of Deity; yet both are divine. What we know of Him is just what our mind is able to bear—the dim light, and not the full blaze of day. What at any one time we know of God is called his *Λόγος*; Fichte's "*Ex*-istence" ("Daseyn") of the Divine Essence; what He chooses to show us of Himself, adapting and condescending to our capacity. And thus all religions have a certain value; there is no exclusive prerogative of special revelation for any single people. The claims of Judaism to know the mind of the Most High are silently withdrawn; and much is learnt from the vague yet sublime speculations of the Greeks. There is a process, a movement, a development upwards towards Divinity on the part of the human soul; there is an idea of a universal and gradual education of the Race. And so in the Alexandrian schools, whether Jewish or Christian or Pagan, barriers are broken down, limits are removed, in a tolerant Eclecticism that sees the finger of God in the course of history, and His spirit working in the aspirations of heathen philosophers. Philo the Jew combines Plato and Moses; Numenius recognises, though a pagan, the debt of the Greek sage to the Hebrew; Origen the Christian attends (so tradition asserts) the school of Neo-Platonists, and these latter inscribe over their lecture-room the exordium of St. John's Gospel. And this new friendliness springs from a sense of the inadequacy of our knowledge to compass and comprehend the full essence of Deity. A new realm of freedom, a region of wonderful possibilities, opens, but it is infinite. The abyss and (in the end) incognoscibility of God is a fundamental doctrine in Platonism.

Book Five

THE NEW PLATONISM, AND ITS VARIOUS PHASES

CHAPTER I

ECLECTICISM: THE COALITION OF POSITIVISM AND MYSTICISM, OR THE PERMEATION OF STOIC DOCTRINE WITH PLATONIC SENTIMENT: THE ATTEMPT TO SOLVE THE ANTITHESIS OF DUALISM BY THE THEORY OF EMANATION

CHAPTER I

PRACTICAL STOICISM BECOMES DUALISTIC, AND ACCEPTS THE PANTHEISM OF SPIRIT IN PLACE OF THE PANTHEISM OF MATTER; GOD RETIRES FROM THE ALIEN OUTER WORLD INTO THE SOUL OF MAN

§ 1. THROUGHOUT this entire epoch the *practical* interest in philosophy as a rule of life is predominant. It was nominally so in the post-Aristotelian schools; but there is a certain unreality in the professions of Greek Stoicism, which seeks not so much a rule of life as theoretical delight in maintaining a striking and unpopular paradox. With its introduction to the Roman world, however, philosophy is absolutely subordinate to the needs of the self-conscious individual. In the former part we have roughly traced the course of ancient speculation on the world and man, and surveyed the state of parties, the condition of Thought, just at this precise epoch. We have seen that the person, now grown mature and fully awakened, is to be the standard, the measure, of all things. Everything, in this new Sophistic age, must justify itself before his consciousness; for in the prevailing egoism (not necessarily a sign of decadence or pessimism, but only of conscious maturity) nothing is accepted which has not an intelligible reference to the single life, which, with its passions, emotions, aspirations, curiosity, and strivings after peace and freedom, is now seen by men to be the true and ultimate (because inexplicable) verity

—indeed, the only true fact of experience at all. We glanced at the several phases of this self-centred spirit, as manifested in early Imperial literature, with its Romantic yearning for the absent, whether past or future, its regrets for the ideal of a long-vanished Golden Age; and we noted how this egoism takes form, in various natures, in the lowest depths of deliberate sensualism or the highest flights of mystical aberration. Again, by tracing the ideal conceptions of this age, it was seen how heavily the monotonous tedium of the Actual pressed on the weary spirit of man: the answer to the first question of the soul, What am I, and whither am I going? is given in the notion of an exile, an imprisonment, and a destined return to the Absolute,—a merging of the *single* in the *universal* Life, from which to sever is misery and unease. But inasmuch as the complete and immediate abandonment of present life can never be made the aim of *practical* wisdom,—even the most individualistic,—there is a certain revival of interest in actuality (though the motive is new); and while the soul waits with impatience its recall to rest, its release from the burden of the flesh,—or (in some sects) of personality,—there is meantime an inquiry into the Domain of Human Freedom, and the practical rules which should guide the emanation from the Divine, still embodied, and retained in custody here. Thus, to finally sum up the general principles of the foregoing discussion, there is the discovery of self: the sense that the satisfaction of this self cannot be found in the actual or the present; and lastly, for the immediate guidance of life, an inquiry for the wisest attitude to these present surroundings, which cannot be easily escaped,—an inquiry which, in many cases, will settle into the practical negation of Quietism.

§ 2. There arises, thus, a keen sense of personal dignity, even in the tiny sphere of the narrowly restricted

autonomy, and a passionate desire for a realm which can recognise this value, and satisfy these instincts. In every system, however (except that of Christianity), the individual, while he may escape from the prison of civic routine to breathe a freer air, finds himself confronted by a stern and inexorable necessity, a law of the Universal Life, which is no respecter of persons, but figures either as Fatum or Fortuna, the relentless march of Reason or the unaccountable caprice of unconscious Chance. What is to be man's attitude to this new Unity which, being omnipotent, and acting on irreversible decrees, is indifferent to his own welfare? He will be driven to have recourse either to antique superstition, which attempts to appease these incalculable forces; or to devout admiration; or to ill-concealed defiance. But the sense of the paradox—the incompatibility of the *single* and the *universal* will—presses hard upon the thoughtful. What right, in face of this supreme Necessity, has the unit to independence? He is a limb of a gigantic animal, and condemned by some strange law to a disturbing illusion of spontaneous action. This disheartening feeling of servitude to an unknown and unknowable Power is apt in certain natures, as we have before remarked, to clothe its despair in the language of devotion,—language, be it noted, which is entirely unmeaning apart from a personal, and thus comprehensible, authority, whose ways agree with our human notions of justice and benevolence, and on whom we can rely as, after all, knowing what is best for us, for our perfection and our discipline. Peace can only arise when there is some such "concordat" between the *particular* and the *universal life*. Self-consciousness is a sign of the perfect blossoming of the world-process, a mark of the final maturity of that individuality of the spirit which, apparently, is the goal of Nature's action (whether we view the outer world from the idealist side,

as a result of our thought, or reverse this, and conceive material evolution as striving to produce, and perhaps to set free, the human personality). A sense of personal worth, as being an end in oneself, is inseparable from a high state of civilization, as from all schools of genuine Philosophy. It is ineradicable, when once this feeling is awakened, except by a deliberate return to the woods and acorns of unreflecting animalism. Those who oppose this logical doctrine of Rousseau and the Cynics, and refuse to regret the development of man's reflecting and rational faculties, must solve this question, How is it to be satisfied? If this demand for independence be not satisfied, it must be violently repressed, either by conscious endeavour of pious and devout resignation, or by the stern arm of social restraint. All education teaches the hollowness of abstractions,—the State, Duty, the Reason of the World, Humanity, love of mankind; on the contrary, it removes our thoughts from the majesty and sanctity of exterior law to the Lawgiver, who is within us; and arouses a conviction of personal worth and finality,—which absolutely defies all threats of expulsion.

§ 3. There is one way alone to regain contentment: it is the *subjective* transformation of the unknown Power, from an unconscious Fate into a Spirit of love and mercy. This change of thought will operate without fail in certain emotional natures, in any age of enlightenment like the one which we are now considering; with the cold sternness, the physical barrenness, of Stoicism will mingle the devotional hope and trust of Platonic aspiration. "*Man cannot change the world; but he can change his views concerning it*"—this is the whole teaching of the Particularist Schools. In truth, they agreed that man's only influence was exerted within, upon himself: here Epicurus (with his sensible maxim, "Not things, but our thoughts on things") meets and coalesces with

Stoicism; here too, from a more prosaic point of view, the Sceptics are in harmony with the rest, in this doctrine of the wise man's deliberate adaptation, accommodation, of his own views to suit his ever-varying environment—in politics, religious beliefs, and social customs. Rebellious defiance of natural laws is extreme folly; yet so is an attempt to reform any given condition of society, itself a manifestation of the Divine, of the Supreme Wisdom. If happiness, meaning now nothing positive, but a torpid state, a mere absence of disturbance and disquieting passion,—if happiness be entirely a matter of the inward feeling, the same thought will recur that before induced the Individualist Schools to retire from action, as dangerous and disappointing, and to distrust Nature, as callous and uncertain. The final Power is robbed of all personal interest, all concern, in the affairs of the world; and the wise man who sought a higher communion and affinity than that of earth, finds himself in an empty universe, which is at best the reflexion of an absent reason. Shall he despair? Not without one last effort of Faith: by a violent act of will, and in defiance of all fact and experience, he invests this Power with moral qualities which are, strictly speaking, inadmissible in the purely *physical* theology of the Stoics. There is, in the prevalent Eclecticism, a distinct sign of alliance between this stiff positivism and the devotional mysticism which will claim Plato as its leader. Both, to a very large extent, are *practical* and not *theoretic* schools of life; an age which had outlived any exaggerated reverence for this master or that, naturally seized on fundamental notions rather than particular doctrines, and combined what was similar and consonant, or, again, complementary, instead of laying stress on minute points of difference in matters of speculation. This Eclecticism is by no means a sign of trivial or indolent thought,

wandering idly from flower to flower, and gathering therefrom only what from moment to moment seems fair and attractive: it is rather a mark of seriousness, of an earnest resolve to pass beyond prejudice, and to accept whatever truth can penetrate the mists of man's ignorance, from whatsoever quarter it comes; these centuries, in particular, are full of such examples of broad toleration. Cicero unites the Stoic materialism, the Academic distrust, with strange Platonic yearnings; Seneca, himself a mystic, avails himself of the axioms of Epicurus; Cynicism itself is leagued with missionary zeal—respects and observes the decencies of Society; Christian believers examine heathen efforts to attain truth with interest and approbation; Plutarch combines Plato with Persian and Egyptian dualism; and the Gnostics, in their marvellous systems of thought, leave no religion, no philosophy, no superstition untouched and untransformed by their mistaken zeal.

§ 4. Stoicism, like the religion of Buddha, lacks an object of worship. After the expulsion of the capricious and anthropomorphic deities of popular belief, Philosophy is oppressed by a sense of universal Law, either physical, æsthetic, or moral; (for I venture to apply the term æsthetic to that notion which represents beauty, order, and harmonious interaction as the *purpose* of the world-process.) It is clear that if the Law be called Moral, this word is applied in a new and unusual sense, and is, in the last resort, unmeaning: it is out of relation to what we term *moral* in everyday life. In what significance, that has any affinity to the common use, can Nature and the Power which guides it be called Moral?[1]

[1] "For it is clear how fruitless must be any attempt to borrow from Soulless reality rules which have an unconstrained and natural relation to our action, with its totally different motives and aims."—LOTZE, *Microcosmus*, bk. vi. ch. i.

Physical regularity and uniform operation may indeed excite our wonder; but the intrusion of *ethical* notions into this reverence for Nature was especially inexcusable in the Stoics. In their Quietism, they either refused to trust the beneficence which they so loudly proclaimed, or they believed that God, like their own will, was unable to direct the course of events.[1] While the ethical content of philosophy was immensely enriched; while new duties were promulgated of sublime heroism, pious resignation, unselfishness, considerate treatment of slaves and women; while fresh responsibilities were heaped upon the honest citizen and the wise man—the strictly *ethical* conception of the Divine Nature evaporated altogether; nor can we wonder at the constant tendency to exalt the perfect sage above Zeus; the laborious exercise of arduous virtue above a sort of necessitarian and unconscious perfection. The Epicurean was content to equalize the bliss of the gods (as they sat apart in the intermundial spaces) with the serene enjoyment of the sage, who tried to imitate them. But the Stoic was content with nothing less than superiority; and the explanation is easy. Their deity—the complex of physical forces, culminating in the vivid yet impotent will of man—can have no *ethical* significance. Demanding implicit obedience to his edicts, he supplies no example, gives no encouragement, provides no protection. The normal state of the wise man is persecution, misunderstanding, hatred, isolation; unsolaced by a sense of present sympathy or a hope of coming justice. The Stoics, indeed, urged that the sage was content with his own sense of merit and superior excellence; but this very

[1] I shall have reason to show, later, that this is actually the case; the omnipotence of the Universal Law was tacitly denied, and God takes up His abode in the Human Soul as a last asylum, where alone His authority is recognised.

insistence attempts to disguise their disappointment and despair. He felt his loneliness very acutely, and, to remedy this, resorts to the introduction of a new idea, wholly extraneous, and in the end inconsistent with his original principles. *The soul of man is a part of God*, in a very special and unique sense: not in the coarse materialistic doctrine, that it is a refinement of the fiery element that creates, transforms, and sustains the World; but in a truly personal and ethical sense,—the hope and consciousness which has supported the Mystics of all times,—the sense of an indwelling, abiding presence, of the loving spirit of the Father.

§ 5. Before the period of earnest and practical resolve in the Stoic School, and before the infiltration of Platonic ideas, the affinity of God with the soul of man was a mere *physical* postulate. But this theory now becomes the foundation for devotional *ethics*. Invented merely to account for the excellence and powers of man, as the last product of the technical, "artistic Fire, marching forwards to the development of the world," this hypothesis (and in its nature it can be nothing else) becomes the consolation, the support, the encouragement of the wise man, otherwise hopeless in a foreign exile. God is within the soul of man—is the voice of conscience; is, moreover, this peculiar and encouraging sense of a "present help in time of trouble," which complete resignation will undeniably awaken in trustful natures. But if God is in truth the sojourner in the human soul, the honoured guest of mortal man, and loves to dwell there in a special manner rather than in the outer world of material change, succession, decay—What of this concrete world, and the blind force which rules it? Here recurs an inevitable Dualism, utterly foreign to the protestations of the Stoic creed, and yet latent there, awaiting the evoking power, the purifying, and to some

extent reconciling, influence of the Platonic and ascetic text, *φυγὴ ἐντεῦθεν κ. ὁμοιῶσις Θεῷ*. This condition of things is pronounced not only good, but the best possible, —the only conceivable manifestation of Supreme Reason. Matter is the one, only, and final reality; and beyond this life for man there is no other.[1] Yet, withal, the expression of Stoic contempt for matter, their yearning after a certain ideal Kingdom, unattainable in this life, their distrust and defiance of the realm of nature, their hatred of the body and its instincts,—will be found to rival any of the rapt and ecstatic aspirations of the pure Platonist, who starts not from the necessary involution and inseparability of Body and Spirit, Form and Matter, but posits these in a fundamental and irreconcilable antithesis.

§ 6. It is a remarkable thing that the finest defence of this concrete and visible world against the bitter attacks of the Gnostics—proceeds by no means from the school of these professional eulogists of Nature,[2] but from the inmost depths of Platonic mysticism. It is Plotinus (ii. 9) and not Aurelius who raises his protest against these blasphemers of creation; and it is Plotinus rather than Seneca who reconciles men to this life, and dissuades from suicide,—giving this life a peculiar and eternal value, just because it is not the only and final existence of man, but a step in an infinite series, a stage (if we will use it aright) of discipline and purification. Thus this Stoicism, having recourse to the consolations of Platonic emotion, and starting (as the original and genuine school among the Hellenists did not succeed in doing) from the thinking subject, wavers between a complete despair in things as they are and a devotional

[1] Compare Emerson's view, quoted above, p. 280.

[2] See Lucian's amusing debate between the Epicurean *denier* and the Stoic *champion* of Divine Providence.

resignation to the will of an almost personal Power, invested for this purpose with ethical excellence, and brought into the closest communion with the musing Quietist. (Yet a doctrine of comfort under affliction more entirely foreign to the cold professions of the earlier Porch, more incompatible with the boasted *αὐτάρκεια* of the wise man, it would be impossible to imagine.)

§ 7. But it is high time to at least try to define a word which has been lightly used to convey a general impression. What is Mysticism? It is perhaps best explained by the foregoing comparison of Plato and the Stoics. It is, to be brief, *an attempt to solve, by love and emotion, the dualism of the world*; and especially to reconcile the constant struggles and defiance of the *individual* will with *Universal* law. It is, and always has been in the past, the immediate result, in certain minds, of pure scientific inquiry into the springs of Being, the purpose of the World, the destiny of Man. Knowledge (strictly speaking) declines to be concerned with such questions; and rightly too, *ἄλλης ἂν εἴη σκέψεως*. Knowledge conducts, it may be, to absolute truth, but cannot show its relation to the acute and sensitive personality, which lives alongside of the pure *Νοῦς*, not touching it at all points. The man is the whole concrete being, and not a part, supposed to be the highest, and wrested from its environment; as if even this were possible. Any system which proposes as the highest Good the satisfaction of pure Reason (man's *impersonal* part, after all) in the region of pure ideas, is clearly foredoomed to failure. The sense of opposition, whether in the intellectual or the practical sphere, becomes too acute to allow of any true *monistic* explanation. Reflection is absolutely and finally *dualistic*, and can by itself see no reconcilement. The problem of knowledge, of subject and object, becomes more urgent, and assumes a kind of

ethical significance; an absolute barrier arises between sense-impression and the outward reality, and challenges or overthrows the certainty of Science. In the world of action, the relation of the particular to the Absolute existence is an unsolved problem. The very nature of this universal life is pronounced unknowable: Providence becomes an empty dream; and the meaning of the World-Process, with its conscious pain and arduous effort, must be confessed to be indecipherable and beyond human cognizance. This is a state of transition; a prolonged sojourn in this reverence for an inexplicable and un-Moral Law is impossible, and certainly not desirable. A firm belief in the advantage and holiness of the just life, in the binding duty of moral precept, leads to a certain reconstruction. Some few will proceed past the brooding pessimism of the Stoics into its logical result, a world-hating and unsocial Gnosticism. But the minds of equable balance recognise the hypocrisy of these latter professions. By a free and deliberate act of moral choice they solve the Dualism: Love raises in them a new sense of the Divine presence, so long lost to philosophical introspection; Providence is boldly reinstated as the governor of the World, not because of its perfectly rational, just, and merciful course, but in virtue of the inner experiences, the blessed contentment and peace of the resigned and acquiescent soul.

§ 8. In Spinoza or other pantheistic writer, one is often disgusted by a parade of unmeaning devotion. Language only possible between a personal God and a creature or child of His making and adoption, is peculiarly out of place when the Universal Process demands the perpetual and motiveless sacrifice of the single life, —when, in a word, the theory of Immanence resolves the Deity into a complex of physical forces, and denies the rights and the dignity of the individual, which it

accidentally produces in this interaction. But with all this, it must be acknowledged that such an abuse of ideas, a survival of obsolete notions in bare words, has been a comfort to many, who would fain overleap the Dualism by a "Salto mortale" of Love, and who gradually come to believe in a Divine Spirit, manifested *more perfectly in man's intelligent soul than in the operations of Nature.* Unconsciously and by slow degrees they drag the Deity over to their side, from the hostile camp of Nature, where He has so long appeared to govern, directing with His wisdom all the insidious or overt attacks on holy sages. They enthrone Him on a long-empty pedestal in their own heart; and, thus equipped and strengthened with a new ally, again face the world, which is now no more the complete, the final, display of God. Man *has* God, and the wise man *is* God; the world is now the unknown factor against which we have to strive, "and God is now on our side; the outer order is no longer His." The irrefutable argument for His being, is no more the unchanging regularity and harmony of an outward process, but our own unalterable sense of blessedness and peace.[1] He ceases to be a physical power, and, ranged with our battalions, aids us against the World,—the intractable lower realm of matter, which, as fellow-workers with Him,[2] we do our best to occupy, transform, and fill with refractions from His glory, with Divine ideas; or, abandoning this entirely, choose the "good part," leaping boldly into an ardent communion with God in the depths of the Soul.

§ 9. How near we have come now to the final plunge of Greek philosophy! The meditations of Aurelius or Seneca form a necessary link, as it were, between the

[1] Which alone, perhaps, is truly ἴδιον καὶ δυσαφαίρετον.

[2] Θεῷ συνεργοί; the secret of Christian zeal and enterprise, the supreme encouragement of J. S. Mill.

earlier Stoicism and the later Platonic School. What is significant in these representatives of the middle and transition period of Roman Thought, is just this introduction of the Mystical element: this Quietism which, from an internal instinct, interprets the Unity, the ultimate Divine Essence, *ἐν ᾧ ζῶμεν κ. κινούμεθα*, according to its own hopes and longings; and deliberately *chooses* to find in a loving and trustful devotion, founded on a happy inward experience of rest and comfort, the true solution to the antagonism of the single and the universal life. This alliance of *practical* philosophy with a religious emotion is absolutely indispensable; for if philosophy leave the path of mere scientific investigation, and be driven to a searching scrutiny of the secrets of itself and the depths of human nature, it cannot help feeling, *first*, isolated and helpless in the midst of cruel or indifferent surroundings, and *next*, by a supreme effort of will, resigned and blessed in self-abandonment to a destiny which it cannot avert,—a law of duty from which it cannot escape, but which it can willingly accept; it will follow of voluntary choice lest it be dragged along, and so find its true peace of mind. That they did thereby attain a tranquillity of mind denied to a defiant Ajax cannot be doubted; and, after all, what more precious treasure can man discover? Is not this inner serenity the "pearl of great price"? At all events, from the first appearance of Individualism, it is just this serene composure that was the sole object of search. Devotional Stoicism and the rapture of Platonism is a development of philosophy which is perfectly legitimate, if it be granted that Philosophy may include a *practical* rule of life.

§ 10. It may also be now the fitting moment for some remarks on another word of ambiguous import—I mean Pantheism; for in the period which we are discussing,

Pantheism is passing slowly from a *materialistic* to an *idealistic* standpoint. It will not, I hope, be difficult to explain this. There are two ways in which the Unity of Being may be brought home to man's mind—by contemplation of the world of *matter*, or meditation on the world of *thought*. The one is objective, and is founded on admiration and awe felt at the spectacle of order and regularity in the harmony of the manifold. When man, full of such a sight of power and beauty, returns to a consideration of himself, he is struck with the sense of insignificance, the transience, of his own life, the futility of his wishes and his hopes. He appears to himself lost in the Infinite, a product of mighty and inexplicable forces, the toy of destiny, a dependent limb of some vast organism. But further reflection brings a certain consolation, as we have just noted. As he dwells upon the problem of his own consciousness, his sense of independence and of responsibility; as he listens with reverence to the voice of duty speaking within; as he awakens to a sense of his own value (however inconsistent with his previous hypothesis)—the world of Nature gradually loses for him its supreme dignity, its final excellence, as the revelation of the One; and he sees a higher than *physical* law written in his own heart. The outer world ceases to have a veritable existence; it is deprived of all significant reality. The life of the individual soul is no chance result of physical forces in their endless and aimless interaction, but is the life of God, the One and only-existent. Now, it is no longer the complex of phenomena that is divinized; in place of this we have the deification of the human soul. God, the original Life and Being, is severed and diffracted into a variety of finite lives, none of which lose contact with the parent, but which rise out of Him, and sink back again, as a wave on a restless ocean, under

whose rippling surface dwells peace in its profound abyss. It is no longer the Pantheism of matter; it is the Pantheism of consciousness, of spirit. In the former stage, soul is a late result of material laws; in the latter, it only truly *is*, and the world without is its creature, having a semblance only of autonomous life. In the former, the one true reality is matter; in the latter, spirit alone has independent life. Stoicism stands firmly on the belief that nothing exists but material substances; Platonism recognises no true existence but in a spiritual region. The union of the two phases is inevitable. A truly self-conscious, earnest, practical disciple of the former school could not rest satisfied with a mere Nature-worship, which cannot be dignified with the name of Religion, but is only an effort to conciliate that which is unaccountable and capricious, and becomes in the end nugatory and abortive. A morbid and subjective melancholy vein of thought will assuredly conduct him to a *practical* result, foreign to Stoic principles,—the denial of the world, the assurance that God lives within him, the hatred as well as distrust of the allurements of sense; and thus, in the monistic system of scientific Stoic Pantheism, there springs up the latent Dualism, with its ascetic resignation, its flight past matter into the bosom of God.

Book Five

THE NEW PLATONISM, AND ITS VARIOUS PHASES

CHAPTER II

DUALISM, LURKING BENEATH THE NOMINAL UNITY OF STOICISM, BECOMES OVERT AND EXPLICIT IN PLUTARCH; WHILE PLATONISM, STARTING FROM A NOTION OF DUPLICITY, ENDS IN A RECONCILIATION:—THE SYSTEM OF EMANATION, OR A GRADUATED HIERARCHY OF EXISTENCE

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§ 1. A TWOFOLD principle of Being and a hostility of primitive Powers! A mysterious conception, in which the rudiments of superficial thought begin, and to which, in the end, revert some of the wisest of mankind! However cleverly masked under an arbitrary hypothesis of unity, Dualism is latent in all philosophical systems, and especially in those which make the loudest professions of success in this process of unification. Where, on the contrary, at the outset there is a frank admission, an honest avowal, of a "*duplicity*" in things, there is, at the completion of the speculative task, a certain reconciliation effected, "that God may be All in all." But so surely as a system starts from postulation of Monad, —of point, of germ-cell, of single substance,—whether in realm of matter or spirit, of absolute omnipotence, within lurk the seeds of rebellion, soon to burst out into open warfare. And it is a singular Nemesis of thought that condemns the Stoic creed to end in a hopeless antithesis of what *is* and what *ought to be*, while Plato's doctrine of the two worlds—heaven and earth, ideal and

real, *νοητὰ* and *αἰσθητὰ*, between which (as Schwegler acutely remarks) he never establishes the slightest connexion—should consummate in a final Unity, as complete as could be desired: in the conception of a universe of graduated existence, an unbroken hierarchy of Being. Here, it is true, there is higher and lower; but "all things, by all ways, attain unto the Supreme Unity." Stoicism adopts from Plato the querulous complaining language about the body as the dungeon of the Soul; while later Platonism, employing this, indeed, as a respectable traditional formula, attaches but little importance to it, and becomes genially receptive of the pleasant influences of the visible world. Stoicism appropriates and uses, with a solemn and sorrowful earnestness, a notion which in Plato remains somewhat otiose; for the master of the Academy can never lay aside his keen delight and rare appreciation of æsthetic beauty. And this is, in fact, the reason why the Stoic School now is reconciled, after a long feud, with the Cynics, whose contempt and abnegation of the joys as well as the decency of life is notorious. The revival of respect for a Cynic ideal is a certain counterpart, in the Greek world, to the violent pessimism of the Eastern Gnostics. Matter is detestable; asceticism the only life worthy of a philosopher; personal and separate existence a burden and a curse to be relinquished gladly, if not violently thrown aside, or, again, to be tempered in its misery by sweet draughts of oblivion, and by a stupor which is mainly physical.

§ 2. But this latent Dualism, imperfectly concealed under a proclamation of an assumed unity, is not allowed to become explicit among the Stoics, or to take rank as a principle. An empty and ineffectual postulate of Monism dominates their entire system in the *theoretic* point of view, although in the *practical life* we detect all the

passive seclusion and Quietism which is presumed to characterize only those who believe in God's absolute transcendence. But this practical Dualism receives a mythical and speculative consideration with Plutarch of Chæronea, who, like current Christian preaching, displayed without reserve or prejudice the Dualistic conception: that the Supreme Creator (or energy in or above the world) is subject to limitation and restraint, whether of intractable material or of the actual and personal hostility of some malevolent rival. Plutarch stands, in a sense, midway between the Stoics, whose monistic theory has been shattered by contact with experience, and the later and reconstructive School of Platonists. He is frankly dualistic; the Stoics are ceasing to be pure monists; and the genial creed of Alexandria has not yet been formulated, which, out of a formal and initial antithesis, will evolve the only complete and satisfactory system of Unity that antiquity affords. In Plutarch reappears the old purely *scientific* or curious interest; it is no longer the difficulties of the *practical* life which claim undivided attention. Therefore there is something of the calm indifference of early Greek thought: a pursuit of truth for its own sake, and not with a view to solve the pressing needs of a despairing spirit, sensible only of its isolation.

§ 3. Plutarch views the world with serene and untroubled gaze. He is not steadily consistent in this hypothesis, which is the explicit display of a doctrine long ago propounded by Plato, and deliberately denied by Stoicism, but returning into prominence and a real actual influence when the Roman Eclectics combine the two systems. But his most striking tract, on "Isis and Osiris," is a studied exposition of it, and we may consider it as representing at least an important phase not only of his particular thought, but also of current speculation.

Let us consider the significance of this half-Persian, half-Egyptian hypothesis. It is a direct denial and tacit confutation of the Stoic belief: that matter is God's body, the formal principle His Spirit; and that thus these two existed from all eternity, involved and inseparable, as body and soul in man. The idea of Creation is, to such a view, inadmissible; the whole process of involving spiritual efficacy with inert substrate—of animating or overcoming matter by form—is rejected: there is no process, no progress, no development; the Universe in its present condition is not explained, but assumed; pronounced eternal, divine, consummate, and self-sufficing. Now—in spite of recent attempts to draw Plato over to the side of a timeless Pantheism, a positivism which refuses to concern itself with the question How or Why? and is content with a formula which covers certain existing phenomena—it cannot be doubted that in Plato's mind[1] the idea of creation was a distinct belief, and his title for God, the Δημιουργὸς, represented a very real truth, entirely foreign to the Stoic divinization of the Actual.

§ 4. The notion of a Creative Power, working patiently rather than timelessly, is inseparable from the idea of Design, of Providence, of a personal Deity (in however vague a sense) who can satisfy the requirements of a worshipper. Stoicism can make no effort, because it cannot recognise a plan, or goal, to which Creation makes a steady progress. "What ever is, has ever been, and will always be, the same."[2] The notion of Will, of deliberate design, cannot find a place in a philosophy

[1] That is, in certain phases and conditions of its working.

[2] It is profoundly significant of the common pessimistic ground of both Epicurean and Stoic, this emphasis on the monotony and lack of purpose, or novelty, in the Cosmic Process. Epicurus and Aurelius are always recurring to this thought: "However long your life, you will see nothing new."

which sets forth as its cardinal doctrine the original and eternal involution and implication of Spirit and Body, Matter and Form. Wherever the *immanence* of God is allowed to oust the complementary truth of a *transcendent* Being (not indeed, as in Aristotle, otiose, but the highest and actual Ruler, by means of lieutenants in full contact with this world), the belief in a divine purpose must be sacrificed; for, even if there *be* a process, or a final goal, it is inexpressible in terms which human reason can appreciate. "Nature," says Goethe, "spurts forth her creatures out of nothing, and tells them not whence they come and whither they go. They have only to go their way: she knows the path. . . . She has placed me in this world; she will also lead me out of it. I trust myself to her. She may do with me as she pleases; she will not hate her work." Nor can we wonder that the poet is obliged to insert a Platonic thought which is really quite out of place in this deification of an incomprehensible Universe, a sentiment which introduces the wholly foreign idea of an almost personal relation: "Her crown is Love; through Love alone can we come near her." Now this "devout, enthusiastic worship" (as Fichte would call it) of the incognoscible *per se* is not likely to satisfy anyone but a poet, who does not start from a careful inquiry into *practical* life, but is led away by a brilliant allurement of an Idea, and bows down with inconsiderate reverence to remote abstractions. The name God will always waken the idea of a deliberate Creator, working for a purpose, producing, though gradually, His own image or reflexion in a world once utterly hostile and alien,—"the spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters,"—until the thwarting influence is overcome, "persuaded" by gentle means into obedience, and the Spirit "now hath filled all the world." In the Pantheistic conception there is no

education of man, either of the race or of the single soul, except, perhaps, in those dark and already discredited systems in which the world-process is rather the education, the self-development, of God (towards, it may be added, no possible goal but that of self-annihilation). The gradual appropriation by the lower region of the influences shed abundantly on it from the Celestial Sphere — this is a necessary belief for all hopeful and optimistic views on the nature and destiny of the World and of Man.

§ 5. The two worlds—of chaos, the formless material substrate; and of the ideas—must not idly confront each other in the Platonic system. The Divine Being, conceived of as a personal power, has pity on the lawless and unconscious turbulence of the realm below, and, so far as this region can receive His effluence, transforms it by operose and patient toil, until it becomes capable of reflecting His perfection. In all systems of emanation (a later, and perhaps a degenerate, form of Platonism)[1] the leap into matter presents a perpetual difficulty, however long the fatal step be deferred. There may be three hundred and sixty-five heavens, there may be the whole history of vast Spiritual realms behind, but the metamorphosis of the emotions of Achamoth into this concrete and visible universe remains quite unexplained; it is as great a puzzle as before, in spite of all this cumbrous preliminary or preface. But a purer Platonism boldly postulates the coexistence of Matter with God; not in the sense of a malevolent rival (as Ahriman), but at least as a certain limitation, whether of place or authority. What was to bring these ultimate realities into any sort of connexion? It is plain that unless we assume their eternal involution (as Stoicism did), we need

[1] See Chapter III. of this division. Perverted or not, it is the final form into which all Greek philosophy settled down.

something further which may unite them; in short, a divine agency. And there is, it must be confessed, a certain difficulty in many passages of Plato (as we have seen in earlier chapters): the supreme place above this world is given not to a personal Will, nor to a creative intelligence, but (as it would appear) to an idea,—the Idea of the Good. Now, with all deference to the luminous exposition of Idealism by Vacherot and others in the present day, and the notion of the World as enamoured of, as struggling towards, a non-existent phantom, it is inconceivable to the ordinary mind how an Idea can exist apart from a designing reason, or possess in itself any movement, or any influence upon a world below. It is true he leaves in the final abstraction—the most *real* because the most *ideal* of beings—the conception of Goodness. But is this goodness ἐνεργὸς, as St. James and Clement of Alexandria insist that *faith* shall be? In the subsequent development of Platonism, it is impossible to deny its absolute *passivity*! Providence, a conscious or deliberate regimen of the world's course, is inadmissible; there is the ideal world, a vast unexplored realm of splendid and refulgent forms, but in it no source of movement, no impulse to communicate itself or issue forth from its sublime and untroubled rest. There it exists, ever open to anyone who betakes himself thither; it is to Plotinus a "fire open to all comers," πῦρ ἐν μέσῳ κειμένον; but it is neuter, a state not a person, and cannot bestir itself on behalf of its worshippers, as they strive to reach it. There is, latent too, the same dualism in Plato's conception of Knowledge as implying virtue, of virtue as being identical with Knowledge; the Idea of the Good lies alongside of the world; knowledge may (spite of Plato's optimistic belief), as speculative truth or ethical accuracy, also lie alongside the rest of our nature —unmingling, unabsorbed, incommunicable.

§ 6. Out of this difficulty, however, this passive and ineffectual juxtaposition, Plato now and again boldly struggles, not by an involution of the real and the ideal, but by a recourse to myth: an entrance into the domain of Freedom, conscious purpose, and design, by the audacious anthropomorphism of the *Timæus*, where Will plays a large part,—a will operating not immediately, unconsciously, but in face of certain obstacles accommodating and adapting itself. It condescends to the care of a lower region, rebellious and intractable; it does not at once or by its very existence irresistibly conform to itself the universe, but gradually and with patience persuades warring elements and rude antinomies into a perfect and harmonious peace. Once it be granted that the Demiurgus is active and wilful, working for a certain result, and not a passive divinity (or even, as to Basilidians and M. Vacherot, non-existent), and the World-Process is not only conceivable, but defensible: life has a new meaning and a truer value; man becomes the lieutenant of a God who needs his services, as he performs his small part in reducing chaos to order, in bringing the things of this earth into bondage to the Son of God.[1] The notion of restraint upon original Beneficence (I use the word advisedly, as contrasted with mere Benevolence) explains many difficulties well-nigh insurmountable, on the hypothesis of an omnipotent Power.

§ 7. The thought of co-operating and helping God acts with invigorating power upon earnest men—who, no longer oppressed with the crushing belief that Freedom

[1] It is clear that the animating and stimulating thought at the root of Christian belief (especially during the centuries under our notice) is just this *laborious*, nay, even *painful*, work of creation and redemption; a toilsome process rather than an almighty fiat. We are not puppets; God needs our services.

is an illusion, and all things mere manifestations of the unknowable Fount of Life—now feel themselves fellow-workers with God, their personality and merit not extinguished, but a thousandfold intensified by the thought of the eternal worth of the spirit. But on this topic no one need now enlarge after the eloquent exposition of Mr. Mill, wherein (a rare event with him, as with others) he arrives at a conception of the highest moment and worth, by a process designedly impartial and scientific. Although Plato thus takes refuge in a conscious Creation, or rather adaptation of existing material, he does not carry it to the lengths of this doctrine as stated in Mr. Mill: a contempt for the material world, a rejection of the idea of a direct immanence of God in nature, a retirement of the Supreme Being, a delegation of authority, as if by one who, wearied of a self-imposed task, returned to a normal indolence—these points are to be noticed, not only in the system of Plato, but as carried to an extreme by his successors. These lose even that precious sense of design and original purpose, in which the Demiurgus first put his hand to the drifting and tangled Chaos-world, which lay beneath him. But enough of this episode—on the intrusion of Will and Design into a system of mathematical laws, in order to render intelligible the primal impulse, the earliest movement, above all, the moral significance, which originate and still pervade this visible Universe. I must now conclude my remarks on Plutarch's Oriental combination.

§ 8. It is, in Plutarch, *overt* Dualism, not sternly repressed, as among the Stoics, but clearly examined and set forth without reserve. And just as we saw a diffidence, an inconsistency, in Platonic views on Creation (whether προαιρέσει or αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι), there is a similar hesitation in pronouncing on the *wilful* or *un-*

conscious opposition of the lower world. Sometimes a personal will, as of Typhon, struggles against the good; at others, it is not reluctance, but inability to receive the Divine influence,—that famous doctrine of the Capacity of the Recipient, which explains so much of the history of Religion and of the moral development of each man (= the relativity of the conception of God, due not to *His* changeableness, but to *man's* gradual and partial appropriation). It is not clear whether God meant to form the World or whether His creative energy "overflowed unconsciously from the cup of Deity." Neither is it stated with constancy whether the rebellion of the lower region is a myth,—the intrusion of a personal will into inert mass, an expression to signify the stubbornness of an intractable substrate,—or really conveys the hostility, or inferiority, of some original Being, only gradually enchained by the influence of Good. Where, in such a system, is the Principle of Movement, of Life, of the first impulse to existence, as κίνησις? to alter slightly Clement's phrase, ἡ πρώτη νεῦσις πρὸς δημιουργίαν? Where is τὸ πρῶτον κινοῦν?

§ 9. It is the object of philosophy, of purely scientific study, to dispense with these ideas, to assume hylozoism, the inseparability of form and matter, to expel as unmeaning and misleading any notion of Start or Beginning, to insist on the eternity of this present universe, in which, in spite of seeming change, there is a perpetual Now: the belief in Design or Progress or Advancement is seen to be a mere hallucination. Yet it is difficult, nay, impossible, to expel. Where, for example, is Aristotle's real "first mover"? Not, surely, in the motionless Spirit that surrounds and enfolds the universe in the outermost sphere? Does not the movement, the life, spring from the (so-called) lifeless mass below? Are not personal metaphors, the language of

will, so strictly excluded from the definition of God, allowed and encouraged in passages which deal with Nature, and her yearning towards a realization of the Ideal? A lower nature striving to model itself on unconscious perfection, is in some sense superior to it, unless we accept the Buddhistic idea of felicity for God and man. God is depersonalized; but Nature becomes a semi-conscious being, a personified spirit of self-improvement. *So, in a sense, it is she that is good; it is the Divine that is jealous* (*φθονερὸν γὰρ τὸ θεῖον*) of our creation, and advance to completeness. Yes; either jealous or absolutely indifferent; and Nature is our true friend: hence the glad but transient optimism of such as can realize this: "She has divided herself that she may be her own delight. She is ever making new creatures spring up to delight in her, and imparts herself insatiably" (Goethe). But after Stoicism, and a somewhat wider view of the Universal Life and its pains in the new Hellenistic world, the exactly contrary doctrine is posited, which reverts to the old instinctive belief in God's positive goodness, in Nature's positive maleficence. We cannot banish the notion of design, of conscious purpose (*προαίρεσις*); nor can we extirpate the notion of two principles. *If God is not good and cognoscible, Nature is our true deity; but if she fails us in our need, we return to our old allegiance to an unknown God.* The thought of man is always wavering undecided between these two claims on his loyalty: of Nature, which he knows, or thinks he knows; of God, Whom he does not know, but Whom he invests with qualities according to his will,—in a word, between the *Scientific* and the *Religious* interpretation of things, and we perpetually correct the one by the other.

§ 10. We now see the connecting link with the former part of this division,—the "effectual flight" of

Platonic sentiment across the gulf which sundered the *particular* and the *Universal* will. The indefinable Platonic Deity had been denied by his successors: "it is not another world, but the present condition of things, which is reality; we know nothing, can know nothing, of your *ideal* Sovereign; we return to the *actual*, to the region of experience." Stoic positivism, Epicurean enjoyment, Sceptical civism, are all based upon this Aristotelian canon. It will be seen in these Individualistic Schools, however determined be the abandonment of self at the end, yet the starting-point is always the "Search for the Blessed Life," not a devotional, objective adoration of perfect Beauty, of Supreme Reason. God is self-centred, unapproachable, incognoscible.[1] But there comes an inevitable reaction. "Even unknowable, indescribable, incommunicable, my God of pure negation is better than your deification of the Concrete. If I cannot know Him, I pass into His essence by a process above that of cognition." Complete disenchantment has now set in. A shortlived veneration of *Φύσις* (*ζῆν ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει*) as parent of all, kind mother of the races of animals and men,—whose precepts are perfect wisdom, whose commands are alone true morality,—has given place to a *scientific* (Plutarch) or a *moral* (Appuleius and Aurelius) distrust of the concrete and visible world.

§ 11. Men now return to the unknowable God as such, and venerate him as such. This is the whole tendency of Platonic and Alexandrine thought, and is even apparent in Christian theology. The final One, be it what it may, expressed only by negation of all attributes but existence and goodness, is better than this disappointing stubbornness and incoherence (perhaps even the active malevolence) of the concrete. "Let us

[1] As we find in the strange Pseudo-Plutarch Plac. Philoss., i. 7.

return thither." This lower world was allowed to be, in a measure, the reflexion of divinity; and in place of the old systems of arbitrary Monism,—Eleatic, eternal, purposeless,—of accidental Atomism, of masked Dualism,[1] there comes into prominence the great Platonic *Resolution of this Antithesis in the doctrine of Emanation.* There is no "idly confronting" realm, of *νοητὰ* and *αἰσθητὰ*, of *Νοῦς* and a material universe out of relation to it; no violent hostility of Ahriman and Ormuzd; no irreconcilable dualism; no gulf stretching relentlessly between ideal and real;—but an orderly and regular gradation of Being, in which the Highest God is supreme, and known to a few, and the interspaces are filled by the returning exiles of Olympus, the Dæmons, Æons, Angels, Archons, World-Powers of subordinate and delegated authority, who are in a sense divine, yet are busied with this mortal sphere, and share its incompleteness and imperfection. Thus we have reached the final eclecticism of the revived Platonic School, which is now reconciled with the present world, and with the antique popular faith or superstition. It is a candid and honest attempt to expel Dualism from actual life and thought, and provide indeed a higher life, but to find a place for all natures and all capacities, in a Universe which is only One because it is also Manifold.

[1] Really underlying all professions of unity, as the antithesis of Creator and creation, form and matter, Νοῦς and the world, and *νοῦς* and *ψυχὴ* in man himself, culminating in the asceticism of Aurelius, Appuleius, or St. Anthony.

Book Five

THE NEW PLATONISM, AND ITS VARYING PHASES

CHAPTER III

THE UNIVERSE BECOMES *ONE* AGAIN, WITH STAGES OF DIVERSITY AND EXCELLENCE, BUT NO ANTAGONISM OF CONFLICTING PRINCIPLES

CHAPTER III

EMANATION AND CONTINUITY; THE FINALLY ACCEPTED SOLUTION OF ANTIQUITY FOR THE PROBLEMS OF *NATURAL*, AND THE NEEDS OF THE *SELF-CONSCIOUS* LIFE

§ 1. In this prevailing unease and consciousness of Dualism, the Monistic hypothesis has severely suffered. In the sphere of *logic*, the Sceptics (relying no little upon a boasted connexion with Plato) had small difficulty in refuting the dogmatic assurance of the Stoics, that the Universe actually *was* as they *felt* it in experience. And in the *practical* life, nothing could be more complete than the estrangement of the sage from the course of Nature. The more acutely sensible he became of an inner law, of the dictates of conscience and reason, the more disappointment he felt in an outer world,—where no trace of such law could be discovered,—in a Cosmic Process which seemed increasingly hostile to his welfare. In this discrepance the Stoic appears resigned; the Gnostic, passionately angry; the Sceptic, cheerfully acquiescent; while Plutarch gives it a sort of scientific form, borrowing largely from Plato in certain expressions, and accentuating exclusively a peculiar phase in that many-sided author. It is clear that this is no final state. The majority will have recourse to an obsolete objectivity; the sanction of the State, of Society, will be revived, as a visible authority acting

for the common good; and Lucian and Sextus the Empiric, following an idea of Heraclitus, will recall men from a perilous and unsatisfying isolation, or rather wandering in the wilderness,—from an immediate and boastful contact with Nature, or with its Creator,—into the fold of Civic life, in which a Common Reason propounds *practical* and sufficient explanations for problems which the individual by himself can never solve. Or a small number, refusing to believe that this alienation of the subject from objective reality can be the final state of reflecting Thought,—or that, in the actual life, the true attitude of the *particular* will is one of defiance to the *Universal*, thinly concealed under a fictitious contentment,—will close the yawning gulf of *speculation* and *practical* life by leaping boldly into the abyss. This is the subject of these essays: the determined effort made by Platonism, whether in ancient or modern times, to reconcile the antithesis that meets one, in some form or another, in every other system of religious, scientific, or practical philosophy. Pure *science*, as leading to dualism, is now despaired of; a new faculty is aroused: the emotion of Faith, guided by Love. It is this peculiar intrusion of the sentiments and emotions into a search where Knowledge had recognised its limits, that is the significant feature of Platonism, wherever it appears. It is invariably founded on preceding "scepsis" which has shaken the criterium of Knowledge, the basis of Morality, the belief in God, the sanctions of Duty—has, indeed, entirely destroyed the value and dignity of conscious life. It recognises the need of all human faculties—æsthetic appreciation, scientific rigour, and, finally, devotional fervour; and it seems to transcend *personality*, or indeed, at the time, to annihilate it, because (as it would seem) in this way only it can completely satisfy

the needs of the *personal*, and set the anxious soul at rest.

§ 2. It appears, from a hasty survey of philosophy, as if this fervour, which Platonism inculcates as the natural lesson of Sceptical Indifference, could alone bridge over the interval between subject and object. Knowledge or Science, in the strict sense, cannot supply us with notions of goodness, with beneficial purpose and design. And yet here is the practical difficulty which besets the fully awakened consciousness, till then buoyant, eager, youthful; content with objective admiration, or a dualistic acquaintance, which is but the imposition of a convenient formula. If we would go beyond this stage (and who could say he was content to remain in it? Who, that is to say, remains a *positivist* to the end?), the path of Knowledge must be abandoned, because in its very nature it is incapable of leading or directing our inquiries: the relation of the *single* soul to the unknown world around. In the end, every system of thought creeps back again, with more or less shamefacedness, to an alliance with religion: Science, with its suggestion of Cosmic emotion; Positivism, with its worship of Humanity. But the Platonist venerates neither the complex of the Forces of Life nor a generalized idea of man; but boasts to have found a "present Deity"—by no scientific method, indeed, but by a self-centred, receptive, passive meditation, which is a voiceless prayer, yet in which, as an undeniably real experience of the spirit, arises the assurance of God's abiding presence. But I would not do more now than refer to this new method of attaining reality: the *immediate* vision and direct gaze of the Soul at Truth. I hasten to the conception of the Universe as it proposed itself to the Platonist in this age, seeking a third term which should unite the now sundered and

hostile elements, self and not-self,—which united them, indeed, in a practical way by this introduction of feeling, sentiment, emotion; which overcame the obstinacy of self-will, struggling against an incomprehensible Destiny, —into the disordered and tumultuous life of reflexion and unease, bringing a perfect peace. In the study of Cosmogony this general text of Platonism (the transcendence of Dualism by a supreme mental act of loving resignation) must be regarded, on its purely theoretic side, as an attempt to combine forcibly the contrary principles of matter and spirit (and, indeed, all other terms of this original and instinctive Dualism) in an Identity which shall reconcile both. In so doing, just that idea in Plato is brought out which represents the Deity as a wellspring of unconscious goodness, as the Idea of the Good; and they are tempted to reject, as mere allegory, the conscious and deliberate creation of the *Timæus*, which Plutarch, in his half-oriental conception of a *fundamental* antithesis, had taken as his text.

§ 3. But seeing that the whole tendency of human thought and reflection is to discover a universal,—to generalize, to rise to the First and One,—it is not to be expected that men will acquiesce in this plain statement of ultimate warfare. Even the Mazdeist betrays a desire to transcend this apparent feud of Ahriman and Ormuzd,—the alternation of light and darkness, the interaction of repugnant forces,—and to conceive of this Manifold, this dualism, as the outcome of a single power, which "expresses itself in polarity": God is the place of the union of contraries. Thus Platonism, which has much in common with Gnosticism, strives to reach a final God where all distinctions are abolished, all predicates negated, in an ultimate Nothingness. For it is curious to note, in other systems, how superficial and

arbitrary is the proposed union; how little claim has their Supreme Deity to be considered the First Cause of all things. In fact, whatever early philosophy or religious creed we inspect, we shall find the world-system and the existence of the creature assumed; a god is brought in afterwards to explain the progress of man and the advance of wisdom or national prosperity; he is himself, like us, a manifestation of an unknown Force.

§ 4. A fundamental unity is still wanting, in which all differences coalesce, all separations cease; in which repose implicitly and at peace those opposites which, arising thence to form the World, will do strenuous battle, yet for a certain common end: they are not, in truth, real foes, independent, and each fighting for the extermination of the other; but, as in some Roman amphitheatre, they play at war, under the eyes of a proconsul or an emperor, whose presence, perhaps, is forgotten in the excitement of internecine contest, that seems to be in earnest. Thus it is a cardinal doctrine of orthodox theology, that evil is no independent sovereign, but in some indefinable way subserves a mighty and beneficent purpose. Now, it cannot be denied that this ultimate First and One, the cause of all the Manifold, seems in these mystical systems of Cosmogony to be the mere postulate of Infinite Space,—a point, it may be, yet also a circle whose centre is nowhere. The final source of Being, then, is not-being: indeterminateness, boundless possibility, infinitude which "contracts itself,"[1] and sets up over against itself its own thoughts as its other. The Basilidians of the age of Hippolytus have the courage to declare boldly in favour of the Non-existent as the final goal of all our longing. This boldness is absent in the Indian religion, yet their first principle clearly *is not*,

[1] As the esoteric Jews pronounce, with the ingenious symbolism of the growth of *self-conscious* reason.

while it *is*; for it is reached only by negation. It is only the *possibility* of all future existence. It contains implicitly, as the seed or the egg, all the complexity and antithesis of future determination. It is a potential, inwrapt, involute existence; which issues forth in some hidden manner at the bidding of a secret impulse within. *In fine, "God is a process," and the material world is an emanation, more or less remote, from his very Being.*

§ 5. The doctrine of Emanation professes to solve the irreconcilable antithesis of God and the world, spirit and matter, subject and object, mover and moved, thinker and thought. It does not posit an artificer (with his design) and a material substrate, more or less intractable. Nature, the visible concrete Universe, is pronounced to be the body of the Almighty, the incarnation of His inmost thoughts, thus externalized, objectified, made "other" to His consciousness, outplanted in a continual process of birth and decay,—because His ideas are eternal, but their material envelope is in a perpetual flux, which cannot be arrested even at His bidding. From this point of view comes that enthusiastic devotional wonder at Nature, as the direct and immediate expression of Divine ideas, which in its higher forms is always wedded to Pantheistic Platonism.—And now we can consider that question which is irresistibly suggested by a survey of Nature: Is the visible creation this perfect expression of the Divine nature, or a restriction which limits and impairs it? Is it the necessary complement of spiritual thoughts, or a degeneration? Are the Divine Ideas deliberately sown in the field of matter, to rise into blossom and perfect flower, or are they entangled inextricably, imprisoned here by some mysterious gaoler? Does Creation *limit*, or *express*, the power of God? And is man (who in a sense stands between God and the world, an interpreter midway)—is he to

save himself from this world, from his own composite nature, and be with the Source of Being alone? or, refusing to regard the creature as bad, shall he compromise (as the Asclepian Dialogue exhorts), making a compact with this nether sphere, ruling it and ordering it in forms of beauty, but not forgetting his higher relationship? (For indeed such practical questions do arise from these *speculative* notions of the Divine Immanence or Transcendence; or shall we say that the *practical* problem—the yearning of man for a better home, the prevailing discontent with the present—suggests, rather than results from, the theoretical doctrine?)

§ 6. Now, the one watchword in the new Platonic philosophy, which advances from the Empirical nature of man to a study of the problem of the Universe, is *continuity*. There should be no abyss, stretching between Creator and created; rather a perennial outflowing of the fulness of Divinity (τὸ ὑπερπλῆρες of Plotinus). There must be an orderly descent or radiation of the Divine Potencies, out from and away from God, the centre, who by these satellites or sons is everywhere present. It is an expansion of the spiritual realm, originally self-contained (*an Sich*), into limitless space and time; not a sudden conquest of a foreign land, and a subsequent retreat. The One becomes the Many, in order that the Many may become the One. All is of God, the Primal Source; everything thither again returns. In man, reason worships herself and her own work, repeats intelligently the operation of Creative energy. There is no breach, no cataclysm, anywhere; by almost insensible gradations, the ladder of Jacob, we unite earth and heaven, and connect the lowest form of matter, the first rudiments of life, with the inmost essence of Deity.

§ 7. Continuity! In that word is the sum of

Plotinus' writings, of his speculative cosmogony, of his practical ethics, of his popular exhortations. The problem of alienation, of estrangement from the secret Mover of the Universe, was solved; the true path of reconciliation, or, to speak more humbly, of redemption, lay open to all. How can man become anew reunited to God? is now an unmeaning question: they have never been separated. We—who in our complex nature present an epitome of the entire fabric of Creation, combining in one diverse unity the qualities of stone, plant, animal, angel, dæmon, God—have a choice to make; that is all. We must, to a certain extent, specialize. Each man may devote himself to some one particular side; yet even the most profligate and depraved, buried in the grosser delights of the sensuous life, is not wholly cut off from God. At will, and by an effort (the difficulty of which Platonism is, however, apt to depreciate), we can shake off our slumbers, and reject the phantoms which press around us; and raise our eyes to the better part, the spiritual realm of logical generalizations, of Ideas; and, too, of immediate vision of the Divine. And in this system, Nature reappears as the bride of God, no longer as His enemy. She is His other self. As a last emanation from the ever-teeming fertility, she, in so far as she is able (here again we have the famous dogma, "pro captu recipientis"),—so far as she is a perfect and flawless mirror,—reflects the hidden and spiritual laws, or, as Plato prefers to call them, the Ideas of God. Nothing in the work of Plotinus is so modern in tone, so earnest and convincing, so clear in form, as the tract against the Gnostics, "who say the world is evil" (ii. 9).

§ 8. It is well known how, from the very first, Platonism makes use of the Sun-metaphor to express the relation of the One and the Many. In the visible world it is an absolute counterpart to the Heavenly

Source of Being. Like Him, it radiates into the fathomless distances of space, sowing the seeds of worlds and planets and satellites; itself always full, yet always giving forth its influence; itself impalpable, pure, sheer flame with no admixture, yet the cause of light and warmth and existence wherever its beams can reach; penetrating into the lowest depths, the dimmest obscurity; never defiled, though it touch the dregs of matter; everywhere present, close to us, yet possessing, too, a hidden, unapproachable life within itself into which we cannot enter; blinding the untrained eye by its light, so that some men refuse to look up, in fear; benevolent by its very nature and effects, yet for this very reason darting down plagues and pestilences, and burning up the wickedness of man, the evil of nature;—immanent everywhere, so long as we live, and enjoy sight, and detect colours and differences and shapes and forms, yet transcendent (like Philo's idea of God) in an abyss of flame, where mortals enter only by putting off, like Hercules on Œta, their robe of mortality.

§ 9. The Golden Chain of Life! Unbroken series of links let down from the throne of God! Such doctrine—however qualified in each master by temperamental asceticism, a credulous superstition, a love of theurgic mystery—is the fundamental principle of the New Platonism, a solution of the current Dualism, a reaction from the creed of estrangement or unsympathy. But let us guard ourselves from reading into these authors modern notions. In later Idealism, God becomes conscious first in us as separate centres of consciousness. Until we reach man, the world-process is the nightmare of a sleeping giant, a somnambulist who performs certain actions, which he recognises or understands only when he is awakened. First is the egg, and then the bird. There is no *prius*; everything is in ceaseless process from

absolute negation to determinateness, which is negation modified. The idea of God is man's worship of his own shadow, projected, as in some Alpine mirage, on to vacancy. This is the doctrine of the Extreme Left of the modern Hegelian party; which naturally creeps back to an alliance with materialism, and the positing in space of an atom, which will expand into the manifold of existence. In effect, there is no difference between the implicit virtue of an Idea and the expansive properties latent in an atom: Idealism and materialism coincide. Only in man is the fulness known of these lurking potentialities. All is a path from nothingness up to him. (The ethical duty, then, alone remains to him, nay, the only freedom, of voting his own annihilation; either in altruistic sentiment, or, more efficacious still, by universal suicide.) But no serious student of the later Platonic writings will believe that they held this doctrine.

§ 10. Veritably and objectively, the Trinity of Plotinus and the threefold Trinity of Proclus or Dionysius do exist independent of our thought of them (although, in the various stages of our apprehension, understanding, reason, above-reason, we become united to them, and partake of their nature). Man is not the one reality in the world; and the gods are not abstractions of his thought, or hallucinations of his imaginative faculties, or modes only of his spiritual life. There is a certain definiteness of outline, in this system of Emanation, that preserves it from the cloudiness of Idealism. Matter is not scorned, nor denied; it has a place, and that the lowest, in the Divine Scale of Beings. Man partakes of two natures, the divine and the earthly, but he does not create the Universe out of a process of inner thought or dialectic. It is there in its fulness before ever he begins to think; and the Gods are in no way dependent upon the casual exercise of our abstracting

faculty, but, serene and untroubled, their series stretches endlessly above us, into the Infinite One. They are no casual creations of our fancy, springing into a sudden and precarious life when we happen to generalize and reduce things to their lowest terms. These successors of the Platonic Ideas do live in a veritable world apart, and independent. Yet it will be said: "But Thought and Matter are completely implicated and involved with each other in the Platonic System?" By no means; this is to destroy the entire significance of the doctrine of Emanation: to substitute for it, again, the system of inseparability or identity (ἀχωριστὸς). *At a certain point*, as Man, the two natures do coalesce in a single Being; but above him, in pure Thought,—below him, in the varied forms of matter,—the opposite factors stretch into infinite diversity. Thought is free and self-existent: Νοῦς is χωριστός.[1]

[1] Here we have a clear answer to the doubtful surmises of Chapter III. in the Fourth Book.

Book Five

THE NEW PLATONISM, AND ITS VARIOUS PHASES

CHAPTER IV

SEARCH FOR THE ABSOLUTE AND UNQUALIFIED *ONE*, DIVESTED OF ALL MORAL EFFORT (WILL) OR CONSCIOUS THOUGHT (DESIGN) IN CREATION: FAILURE OF NEGATIVE THEOLOGY, BASED UPON A POSTULATED AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE OMNIPOTENCE

CHAPTER IV

FINAL FORM OF ANTIQUE COSMOLOGY IN THE DOCTRINE OF EMANATION; PRE-EXISTENCE AND TRANSCENDENCE VINDICATED FOR THE SUPREME SOURCE OF LIFE, BUT A DELIBERATE PURPOSE IN CREATION DENIED

§ 1. MAN is not the whole creation, though he has in himself affinities to every other creature. He is the "*epitome*" of the rest; but while their natures exist or have counterpart in him, they have their own independent subsistence. The Mediety of man is a favourite theme of these catholic speculators to whom higher and lower existed, but not the deliberate and irreconcilable hostility of Good and Evil. (Picus of Mirandula well represents in his Apology this sense of man's complexity and latent potentiality to rise to highest and sink to lowest.) But let us be misled by no forced doctrine of modern Implication. Spirit in its various forms, Goodness, and Mind exist in and by themselves; their reflexions are immanent in the visible world, *but their essences are not imprisoned in their copies.* The pool reflects the heaven, but does not contain or embrace it. The First Principle transcends even Being; Mind (where, properly, existence and "duplicity," or "otherness," begin) comprehends the ideas or archetypes of sensible things; but it is with the World-Soul, first, that a direct and inseparable connexion, involution, with matter is necessary. Man attains to the perfect world of Mind by reflexion, to the Supreme

One by abstraction: attains to them only—he does not create them, conscious thought does not begin with him. Existence in all its grades, its steps and series upwards and downwards, does not first obtain a value when the reason of man (or of the Universe in him) awakens from its long trance or somnambulism, and appraises the unconscious efforts of sleeping intelligence. There are other conscious minds beyond man; and the World, with its beauties, its development, its government, has given joy and solicitude to countless beings of a higher perfection, who pre-exist in their own right indefeasible, and live in a world of their own, besides exercising tutelage over the provinces of the Universe. As there is a vast reservoir of physical life, the World-Soul,—of which each of us and each living thing enjoys an inlet, but does not exhaust the whole,—so Mind is a reservoir too, from which each spring or fountain of particular intelligence derives, without draining, its source. In ordinary minds, this χωριστὸν εἶδος, or self-existence of spirit,—emancipated from body and originally free,—cannot possibly be kept clear of a certain local or topical connotation. Heaven is somewhere; God is in some definite place; and His kingdom is not now, but in some distant future, or, dimly, in some remote past. The passionate modern protest against this futurity, this strong insistence on the absolute and final value of that which is Here and Now, the actual presence of Eternity, not to be waited for until a sensible envelopment has fallen off the Soul,—all these are doubtless expressions of a genuine Truth: that it is with the present, the concrete, the actual, the material, that we are concerned, and not with a dreamland of subjective fancy. Emerson cannot understand a missionary when he talks of the "other" world. God, heaven, and eternity are here, "or they are nowhere."

§ 2. Midway between these extremes stands the

Platonist. Heaven is here and now, attainable by the adept even in the body; God is within us, and takes up His dwelling in the soul, if we will leave the doors open to receive and welcome Him. But the titles of Deities—the difference, qualities, energy of these Divine Beings—are no empty metaphor, no loose poetical name for certain exalted states of our consciousness, but, by themselves, represent objective reality. They are not amenable to space and time. God—conceived of in ascending scale as source of physical life, of intelligence, of emotional ardour—is everywhere; not only in minds of self-conscious men, who call Him, as an Idea, into a precarious and brief existence, but always self-sufficient. It has ever been a matter of dispute, what sense to attach to these ideas, of which philosophy speaks so largely. Is an idea non-existent, or has it life in itself? When we talk of the *ἰδέα τἀγαθοῦ*, do we seek to convey the notion of God in a reverent periphrasis, just from this philosophic point of view regarding Him as the final goal to which the World-Process is hastening? Or do we mean that, in some incomprehensible way, the heaps of chaotic matter in primitive disorder were strangely stirred and touched by the magic influence of a non-existent, unrealized perfection. It is clearly impulse (an almost personal impulse) that we must concede to *one* or *other* element in this impenetrable Dualism. Plato's *ideal* world had no principle of movement in itself, no real connexion with the lower region of matter: it was an insoluble mystery how the forms or ideas entered the substrate.

§ 3. Aristotle—whose contribution to cosmogony is just this *movement, development from within*, immanence—is forced, if he leaves the Prime Mover a cloudy self-centred Abstraction, to attribute yearning and desire to the nether world. In one case God orders, arranges, and governs by providence unconscious Matter; in the other, Matter

strives, by a law of its being, after a perfection which it dreams of and unconsciously imitates: a perfection which is purely an affair of a possible future, and, if partially realized, is at once transcended, and ceases to be the object of the passionate striving (*τὸ ἔφετον*). In a similar way we have seen the theory of Hartmann expressed: the world is the product of a good Mother, the Idea, of a bad Father, the Will, who, "captivated by the charms of the Idea, approaches it with a Satyr's sensuous desire; the Idea cannot escape the lover's embrace, and brings forth the child which ought not to exist, the World." Here is a gnostical allegory of Aristotle's view,—a struggling effort in Matter to shape itself after a (non-existent?) Idea. This impulse which is assumed to exist in Matter unexplained, is called the Will-to-live; all motion is from below towards an infinite void above, filled only with the sighs and groans of Nature, as she strains forward into Nothingness. This, let it be once and for all remarked, *is the exact reverse of the New Platonists*, to whom all motion is from the truly Existent, downwards and outwards (*πρόοδος*), welling from a Final and Initial Source of Goodness instead of from the unholy impulse of a disastrous Desire for Life.

§ 4. Thus the Universe *starts from* perfection; it does not *attain* to it late in time. But it cannot be said that the Platonists suppose a conscious Designer to have presided over the Creation, which is the "Issue of Virtue" from the Central Principle. Deliberate plan—implying an impulse from *without*, and an adaptation of means to an end, of material to its proper work—seemed to them essentially human: *Will* only operates, they thought, in face of opposition; it is an inner response of defiance thrown down to the thwarting antagonism of something outside our real self. *Design* can only be predicated of

an imperfect creator, who expects to *become*, who is content to wait, who is forced to exercise patience. And as thus, from this conception of the Highest Principle, the supreme attribute of *Moral* nature is eliminated, so too they dispense, as the School progresses, with the invariable characteristic of *Intellectual* life. The quest of entire philosophy is the One, in and by itself; Plato's secret is generalization, which rises from the particular instance to the eternal definition—the universal Law. This is what we all do, as rational beings, every hour of our life; and thus the process of human thought is a *continual* and *deliberate struggle* to *extirpate dualism*; and advance, from the obvious construing of the world as a fight between opposing principles, to a certain mysterious and, at present, Hidden Term, from whence issues this seeming discord (*πῶς ὑφέστηκε τὸ πολλά*), and to which again it returns in perfect harmony (*τὰ πολλὰ ἀφιέναι, εἰς ἓν σπεύδειν, κάθοδος*).

§ 5. Now, the *practical* or *speculative* contemplation of the "ego" involves, as we see throughout this period, an entire Dualism. Conscious man, that is, the sage, sets himself, more and more, over against the world, and restricts his real self to that single determination of will by which he rejects the allurements of phenomena; all in himself that is not this, he hands over to the enemy: "the soul is of God, but the body is of the Devil." "Utriusque officia sunt," says Lactantius in a serviceable sentence, *Div. Inst.* ii. 12, "ut hoc quod est ex cœlo et Deo, imperet; illud vero, quod ex terra est et Diabolo, serviat." So much for the life of *practice*, in which Will and Moral Choice is concerned. But the same antithesis of subject and object, the same doubt as to the relations of the *particular* and *Universal*, startle and discourage us in the speculative life (which is, shall we say, after all but a reflexion of the *practical* difficulty—another and a

calmer method of stating the same problem ?). In both, Duality; and this is to be transcended in a perfect Being. In the World-Soul we still see dim notions of a fight of obedience and rebellion; here all is not peace, but the Supreme Will is to a certain extent thwarted by brutish matter. No; the *Ψυχὴ Κόσμου*, the Reservoir of animal and vegetative life, is not God most high. And, again, there is Duality even in the Supreme Intelligence, of whose eternal thoughts this visible world is, as far as may be, a copy, fulfilling, by constant change and perpetual succession, a certain incomplete imitation of reality in transience; even this cannot be the Highest and First Principle, which must be set free from all notion of will, of deliberate and adapting design, of conscious thought;—for these imply dualism, and thus imperfection, but the Highest is One and above Being, above Knowledge.

§ 6. This process of abstraction, of consummate generalization, is called Negative Theology, and implies that we can only know God by *denying* that we know Him. And we shall see that just in so far as any quality is left predicable of this Supreme and Final One, so is He judged imperfect and unfinal by the more scrupulous divines of the Platonic order; and a fresh search was instituted ("nunquamque satis quæsitus Osiris") for this mysterious Being, which, by the very law of the search, was "disqualified" so soon as it was discovered. It depends much on the temper of each master whether he bestows his attention on this abstract Unknowable; or upon those inferior ranks of deity, who in greater, or less degree, partake of His perfection, and issue at several moments and intervals from the depths of His Nature. The immediate successors of Plotinus,—I mean the calm and rationalistic Porphyrius, the scholastic Julian, and the passionate and syncretistic Iamblichus,—recognising both human

fragility and the infrequence of true ecstatic rapture, and the futility of communion with the Supreme, devote themselves mainly to the lesser deities and their ambiguous nature; devote themselves, in a word, to the problem of conciliating philosophy with its old enemy and persecutor, popular superstition. Such questions as the precise relation of man to the world as it is; the exact tribute due to inferior, and sometimes despicable, divinities; the real intercourse and tutelage of the Guardian-Angel or Dæmon; nay, rising to sublimer heights, the mode and limit of interest which the Divine Providence (a lesser potency) could take in the world-process (Numenius),—such questions as these, in close connexion with practical piety and philosophic behaviour, were ceaselessly agitated in the second and succeeding centuries; and it was first from this side that an alliance with time-honoured cults and local rites could be effected.

§ 7. For the great recommendation of the Platonic system, is that it has a place for everything and everyone. Emanation is the talisman, which explains all. Proclus (and perhaps, also, the false Dionysius), on the other hand, though they do not by any means neglect a curious inquiry into the names, stations, grades, functions, provinces of the Satellites of the Great King, yet do themselves press past His servitors into the presence-chamber; that is, concern themselves rather with *absolute* than *relative* Theology. And it is clear that this method is negative, the other alone has positive, content; as, starting from the visible and actual creation, it disposes and orders its ranks, as the manifestation of God in a continuous and unbroken series; it is the πρόοδος. The other complementary inquiry to this (still so dualistic) study seeks to heal the frenzied fever of *particular* existence, end the

alienation of the *individual* soul, by a return into the Eternal Light, which is Darkness and Silence. *Positive* Theology, the study of the λόγος of Philo in *Nature* and *History* (His two inseparable provinces),—all this is familiar to the Platonist. It is a stage, though possibly not the highest; there is no scorn of dæmons and genies, though it is allowed that the adept can transcend the sphere of their influence—can rise above, and command, their power. For such an one, remains only the *negative* side, in which God and man, alike divested of qualities and differences, sink together into indiscriminate oneness.

§ 8. There can be no doubt that, in its Relativity and doctrine of Emanation, the new Platonism did provide a fairly satisfactory explanation of the World-Process (from a practical point of view); and supplied an all-embracing system of religious belief, which could include all men and all religions in a unity which was more than superficial. Though strictly scientific in outline and principle, yet it acknowledged an admixture of the emotions; and thus contradicted no sort of experience either of the *visible* world, with its stages of being, rising into ever more intimate relation with the mystic source of Life; or of the *spiritual* truths of inward experience, borne in upon the meditating soul. Here, then, is the supreme and lasting merit of this great rival of Christianity. Absolute though the object of its search, Platonism acknowledged the development, the manifestation, of this Absolute (the Negative) *in* and *by*, and possibly *for*, the concrete and actual and relative. Nothing is hostile in a Universe which is one, which issues from the One, only to return to it again. There is no opposition to the Divine Will, or rather Nature; for God acts not by will (προαιρέσει), but by this mere fact, that He is;—

αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι. All seeming violations of His supremacy, all imperfections and blots on the fairness or harmony of the world, are mere signs of *distance* from the Central Goodness, which is everywhere, indeed, and present in greater or less degree according to the capacity of spiritual and material creatures. Evil is negation, a void as yet unfilled,—an empty and cold space, where the sun does not penetrate.

§ 9. It must be noted that, to a certain extent, this is a comforting doctrine, and leads us to despair of no one, but rather to entertain hopes of even the most degenerate souls, led, it may be, by a probation of degraded desires, to leave the husks of swine, and return to a Father's arms.[1] And, again (what is no insignificant point), the development, education, progress of the World, is no unmeaning series of changes in a (non-existent) World-Spirit, an abstraction of the entire age; but these words apply to the individual souls, which[2] can be the only true objects of this language of advance or regress. The Soul, as in the semi-Platonic system of Origen, is always in a state of "flux": floating irresolute between higher and lower, because of the very perfection of its Free-will; now ascending to live with God, now becoming tired of the monotony of Eternal Life, and descending curiously into this nether region of concrete existence. So the Platonic ethic is this true appeal to the personal and reflecting self-consciousness, its responsible life and desire for happiness, to be found only in the completion and satisfaction of its better nature. It is thus no superficial appeal to a World-Process; or *a call to co-*

[1] A good instance of this kind of allegory is Appuleius' mystical treatment of, and significant additions to, a well-known legend of "Transformation."

[2] As Lotze, for example, reminds us.

operate in an unintelligible plan, which demands the sacrifice of the unit. It is fundamental, and concerns itself with the needs and aspirations of the single heart. But, it must be remarked, there is no final purpose, no Beyond: God has no plan to be consummated—all *is* because He *is*; the future of the soul is never determined for eternity—it is, indeed, perpetual life, and (for the soul especially) a perpetual motion, up and down the stairs of being, as in Jacob's ladder; there can be no progress, for the goal is always indefinite, always beyond us.

§ 10. We have in the foregoing remarks sounded the depths of the Platonic revival, and the causes which led to it. It is clearly an attempt to combine a lofty speculation with a tender piety, abstract thought (which cannot overleap dualism or reconcile itself to the World) with religious emotion, in which doubts or differences insensibly pass away. It finds, as we have noticed, a place for every divinity and for every worship; and the theory of Emanation, as against crude Dualism or Creative Design, explains the inequalities of a World the administration of which cannot be termed *wholly* Providential. The highest or Absolute God is not the one who rules the world. Numenius had determined that; and, preserving for the Supreme a sort of far-off Epicurean calm of Ataraxy, he had attributed Providence (on which Stoics laid so much stress) only to the second God. A "*physical*" necessity (if I may use φύσις for the being and inmost nature of God) is operating in the world, rather than an intelligent counsel. And there is a certain weakness in the appeal to emotion and love, on behalf of a Divinity which, after all, shows no interest in *individual* life, takes no thought for the struggles of the soul, and indeed cannot be said to be conscious of them. "Noctes atque dies

patet atri janua Ditis"; by his own choice, man sinks to lower life, or rises to communion with spirit. Like a fire lighted in the midst, anyone is free to warm himself at it, if he will.

§ 11. But a Deity who is the Dark Ground, or the abstract Reason, of the World, does not satisfy the demands of a worshipper. It is a conception too impersonal, and verges on subjective hallucination. The dæmons monopolize a reverence which cannot be paid to a Notion; and Platonism expires amid the steam of sacrifice, and the incantations or delusions of necromancy and wonder-working. The question is really, from a *practical* view, unsolved: What is the relation of myself to the whole world-process? What, too, is the connexion of the Supreme principle with me and with creation? The doctrine of Emanation is an honest attempt to overpower the Dualism in which Stoic Cosmogony had ended; but, like a very similar enterprise in modern times to supplant the positism of natural laws by a sentiment of Cosmic emotion, this proposed explanation, comprehensive though it is, will be found to satisfy few. What is emphatically needed is a divine voice of consolation: something to assure the soul of man of its *intrinsic* worth, of its value in its Maker's eyes,—something which will reinstate the *active*, rather than the *speculative*, virtues in the affection of men; something to show us that practical life and the government of material things is, after all, the highest duty and happiness for us; something to convince us that Will, conscious purpose, and even effort, is more divine than the raptures of self-love or the conscious treasury of Intelligence; and, above all, that God is no palace-secluded Sovereign, but a General who fights with us and for us: and this semi-dualistic conception of the efforts, the *painful efforts*, of Deity, paradoxic

though it may be called, is nevertheless a certainty of experience, the supreme consolation and encouragement of the highest thinkers, the most devoted believers. And in this lies the significance of the Christian Religion.

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